THE UK's TOP NOSTALGIA MONTHLY

FORTIES
POST
A Salute to the '40s

BEST OF BRITISH

PAST AND P

THE HISTORY OF PLASTICINE

A SALUTE TO THE 40s
PLUS! EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

Yesterday Remembered
14 PAGES OF READERS' REAL LIFE STORIES

THAT'LL BE THE DAY
Actor turned author Karl Howman

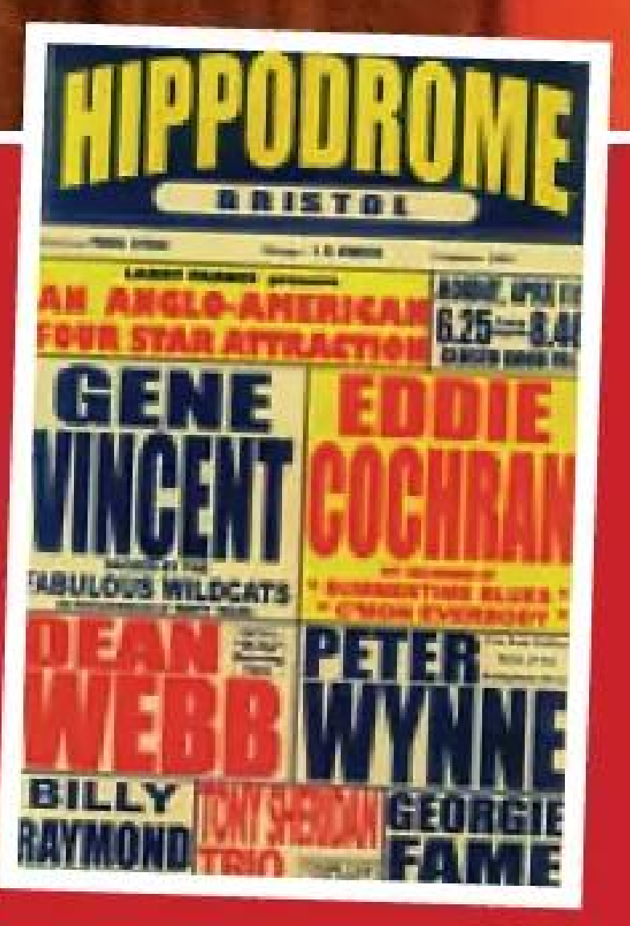
THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN
Crime writer Francis Durbridge

SATURDAY CLUB
"The best in 'pop' entertainment"

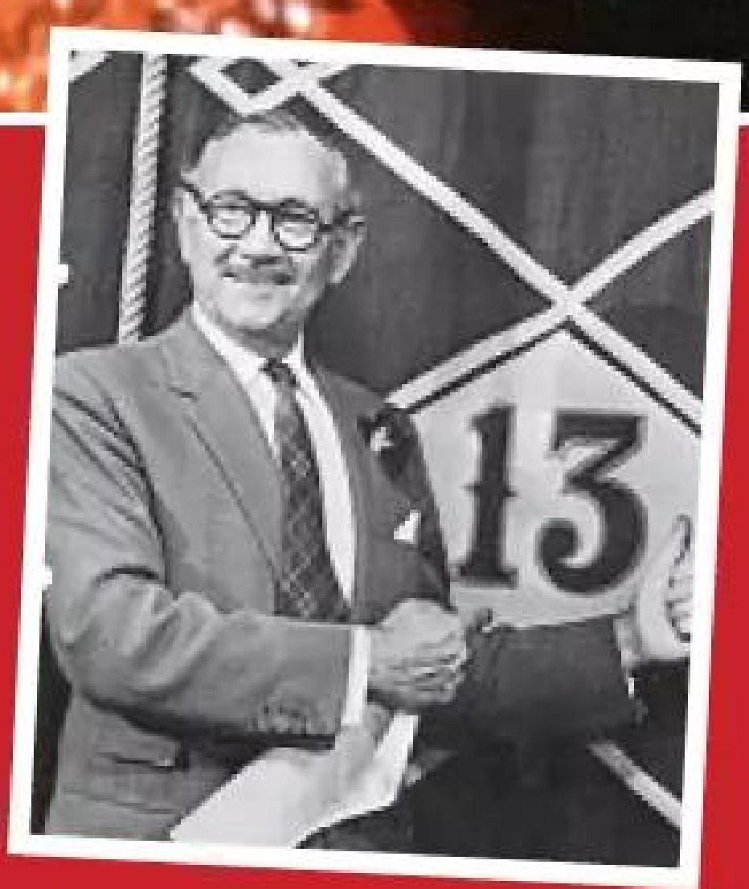
INTO SOMETHING GOOD
Herman's Hermits, still rocking

A WAY OF LIFE
Documentary photographer Homer Sykes

BY GEORGE
A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE AND MILDRED'S BRIAN MURPHY

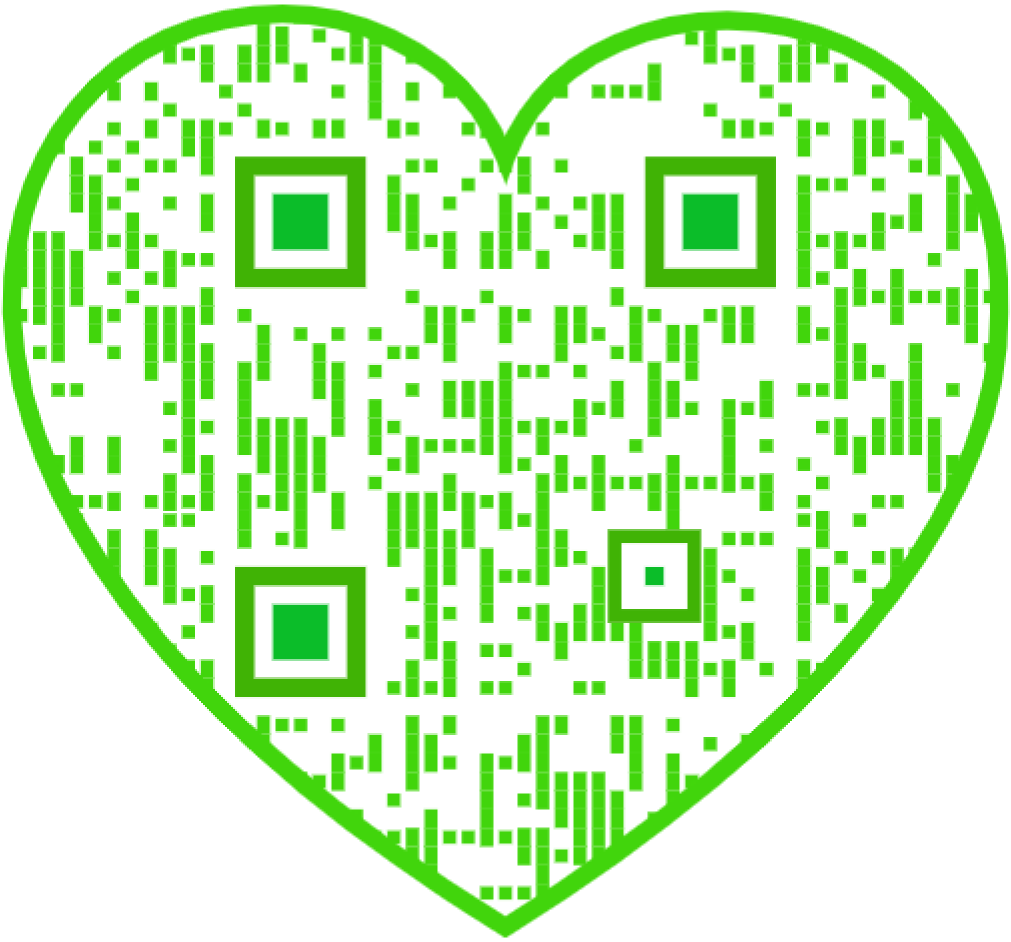

HIPPODROME
BRISTOL
GENE VINCENT
EDDIE COCHRAN
DEAN WEBB
PETER WYNNE
BILLY RAYMOND
GEORGIE FAME

WHEN BRITAIN ROCKED
The Fast Moving Beat Show



A DOYEN OF BROADCASTING
Remembering Bob Danvers-Walker

APRIL 2025
www.bestofbritishmag.co.uk



FLYING SCOTSMAN PENDENNIS CASTLE

RAILWAY TOURING COMPANY
60103
34 A
A-3
4079

LEGENDS REUNITED

Steam fans, history buffs, and those who loves a great day out— this is something truly special! Didcot Railway Centre is bringing together two of the most famous steam locomotives in history for an unforgettable event. Flying Scotsman and Pendennis Castle first met 100 years ago at the British Empire Exhibition in 1925, and now,a century later, they're reuniting for an incredible showcase of railway heritage.

This May and June, come and see these legendary locomotives up close as they stand side by side perfect for an amazing photo opportunity. On steam days, you can even experience the magic first hand with a ride behind these historic engines! Step inside our exhibition to uncover the stories behind their fascinating pasts, from their legendary speed trials to their shared adventures under Sir William McAlpine, even stretching as far as Australia!

Want to get even closer? On display days, step onto the footplate (small additional charge applies) and chat with our friendly crew about what it's like to work these magnificent machines. On steam days, you'll feel the thrill as they fire up and come to life, just as they did in the golden age of steam travel.

Static Display Days: 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30 May & 1 June
Steam Days: 24, 25, 26, 28, 31 May

This is a rare chance to see two icons of steam together once more. Whether you're a dedicated rail enthusiast or just looking for a fantastic day out, you won't want to miss this. Join us at Didcot Railway Centre and be part of history!

Didcot Railway Centre, DIDCOT, Oxfordshire, England OX11 7NJ | TEL: +44 (0) 1235-817200 | info@didcotrailwaycentre.org.uk
Didcot Railway Centre is operated by the Great Western Society Limited, a registered charity, number 272616

EDITORIAL

WIN-OFF

Almost a decade ago, the BBC celebrated the past, present and future of television comedy with the Landmark Sitcom Season. It was, I'm sorry to say, a hit and miss affair. Although it was good to see a recreation of a missing Hancock's Half Hour episode, the remake of a missing Till Death Us Do Part episode and a sequel to Porridge, starring Kevin Bishop as Fletcher's grandson, only reminded viewers how much they missed Warren Mitchell and Ronnie Barker.

The highlights of the season were a 60s-set episode of Goodnight Sweetheart, which sadly didn't lead to a new series, and the pilot of school run comedy Motherland, which did. And while Anna Maxwell Martin and Diane Morgan as Julia and Liz were that show's stars, there were plenty of breakout characters including Lucy Punch as "alpha mum" Amanda, and Philippa Dunne as her factotum/doormat, Anne.

It came as quite a surprise to discover that a spin-off, Amandaland, was in the offing, with Punch, Dunne and Joanna Lumley (as Amanda's mother, Felicity) reprising their roles. Like that sitcom season, spin-offs can be very hit and miss affairs; just because a character stole a scene in their parent series, it doesn't mean they can carry half an hour on their own.

However, Amandaland has that winning combination of good writing and acting, which has made it an instant hit. A second series has already been commissioned, and I can imagine it going on to do better than the show that spawned it. There are few comedy spin-offs that have managed such a feat. In fact, the last spin-off to do so well was probably George and Mildred, and that's almost 50 years ago.

Simon Stabler

DRAGONS? SNAP!

Cardinal Cox uncovers the international history of a national saint

As Robert Browning wrote in his poem Home Thoughts from Abroad – "Oh, to be in England, now that April's there..." Whether it is remembering William Shakespeare or commemorating Saint George, there's something about the showery month that does seem to sum up England.

The legend of Saint George is that he was a Greek-descended soldier in the army of the Byzantine emperor Diocletian and was martyred for his faith. Though, of course, opinions vary on almost all of the foregoing.

The Venerable Bede mentioned Saint George; King Alfred the Great included a church dedicated to him in Dorset in his will, so we know our ancestors of over a thousand years ago knew about him. He only became the patron saint of England after the Reformation when Edward VI dispensed with the services of Edward the Confessor (his ancestor).

One of the first places Saint George was venerated was Lydda in Israel where his remains were said to be, so he became a major figure to the Orthodox faiths of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. From there, his cult spread to Georgia in the Caucasus (where there are supposed to be 365 churches dedicated to their nation's saint). From there he spread to Russia and Bulgaria, from there to Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro. From Russia he spread to Lithuania where George is the second most important saint.

His veneration also migrated south to Ethiopia and west to Malta and Gozo. Across the Mediterranean he was adopted in Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia, then to Portugal. From Portugal it was then taken to Brazil.

In the Middle East though, near Bethlehem, there was a shrine to Saint George at Beit Jala that was much venerated by Christians and Muslims alike. As Mar Jirjis he was adopted by the Muslim faith who have a whole separate cycle of legends about him defying a tyrant of Mosul, where the mosque of Al-Nabi Jirjis (where he was supposed to be buried) stood until destroyed by Islamic State.

The part of the legend of Saint George that we all know, rescuing the princess from the dragon has disputed origins. In part inspired by classical carvings of a Thracian horseman encountering a serpent in a tree; in part derived from Perseus rescuing Andromeda; the tale may originally have belonged to Saint Theodore who was supposedly martyred in what is now Turkey. By the mid-13th century though it was firmly attached to Saint George. When the tale reached England it became part of the pageants, and the last complete civic snapdragon is preserved at Norwich Castle Museum.

It is the multicultural nature of the love of Saint George that makes me think he is the perfect patron saint for modern England.

Next issue: Spangles

www.bestofbritishmag.co.uk
Best of British,
Mortons Media Group Ltd,
Media Centre, Morton Way,
Horncastle LN9 6JR Tel: 01507 529529
help@classicmagazines.co.uk

EDITORIAL
Editor
Simon Stabler
sstabler@mortons.co.uk

Sub Editor
Jon Harris

Publishing Director
Dan Savage

Publisher
Steven O'Hara

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Best of British Subscriptions,
Mortons Media Group Ltd,
Media Centre, Morton Way,
Horncastle LN9 6JR Tel: 01507 529529
subscriptions@mortons.co.uk
Monday-Friday 8:30am - 5pm

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
Group Advertising Manager
Sue Keily
01507 529361
skeily@mortons.co.uk

Head of Marketing
Charlotte Park
cpark@mortons.co.uk

DESIGN
Druck Media Pvt. Ltd

NEWSTRADE DISTRIBUTION
Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT

PRINTING
Acorn Web Offset Ltd,
Normanton, West Yorkshire

Set up a shop save at
your local store and
never miss an issue

FIND US ON
www.twitter.com/bestofbritishuk
www.facebook.com/Bestbritishmag

If you would like to subscribe to the
'Best of British Newsletter' visit
www.bestofbritishmag.co.uk/newsletter

© Mortons Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage retrieval system without prior permission in writing from the publisher. We take every care to try and establish copyright on pictures. However, if anyone feels that they own the rights to a picture, please contact the editor.

When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

CONTENTS
ISSUE 345

Welcome to Britain's **favourite** nostalgia magazine

06 Postbag
Your letters and photographs.

12 The Retro TV Times
Classic television on Freeview, satellite, cable and online.

14 Britain Now
News from around the UK.

16 By George
A tribute to George and Mildred star Brian Murphy.

18 The Boy Next Door
We speak to actor Norman Eshley.

22 Food & Drink
The story of the pork pie.

24 Treasures in the Attic
Can you guess how much it's worth?

26 When Britain Rocked
A look back at the Fast Moving Beat Show.

28 Into Something Good
Celebrating more than 60 years of Herman's Hermits.

30 Yesterday Remembered
Your memories.

36 Window on the Past
Lodging house memories from The Francis Frith Collection.

55 Round the Auction Houses
A selection of recent gems and a preview of auctions to come.

56 Postcard from Sussex

60 That'll Be the Day
A chat with actor turned author and film-maker Karl Howman.

62 The Master Craftsman
Crime writer Francis Durbridge, a virtuoso of the red herring.

Cover: Yootha Joyce and Brian Murphy in a scene from the 1980 film spin-off of George and Mildred.

Photograph: ITV/Shutterstock

64 A Nice Class of Corpse
The radio producer who became a master of the mystery.

66 Breaking the Mould
The history of Plasticine.

68 A Way of Life
An interview with documentary photographer Homer Sykes.

70 In Sharp Focus
Behind the lens of a renowned photography studio.

72 A Doyen of Broadcasting
Bob Danvers-Walker, the "world's most durable presenter".

74 Saturday Club
The BBC Light Programme's popular music show.

76 Female Flair
The talented women connected to the National Trust.

78 Puzzle Page and Cryptic Crossword
Teatime teasers.

82 Bookshelf
This month's good reads.

84 Out & About
Things to see and do in April.

90 Back in Time
Doctor Who star Colin Baker remembers.

FORTIES POST

A salute to the '40s

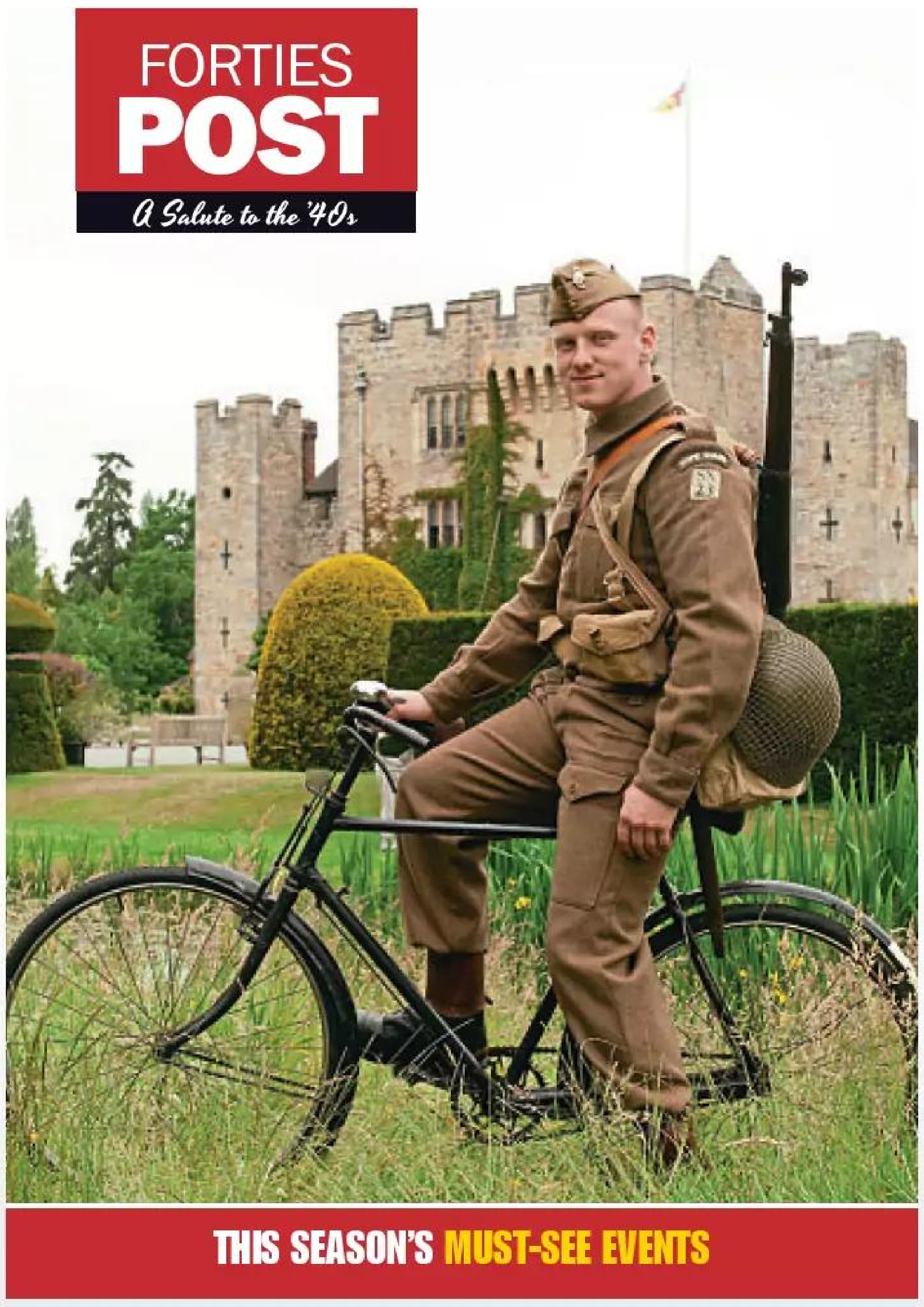
40 Rejubilation
Celebrating victory in Europe and its 80th anniversary.

42 The Perfect Waaf
Remembering a colleague who served in Bomber Command.

44 The Dance Directory

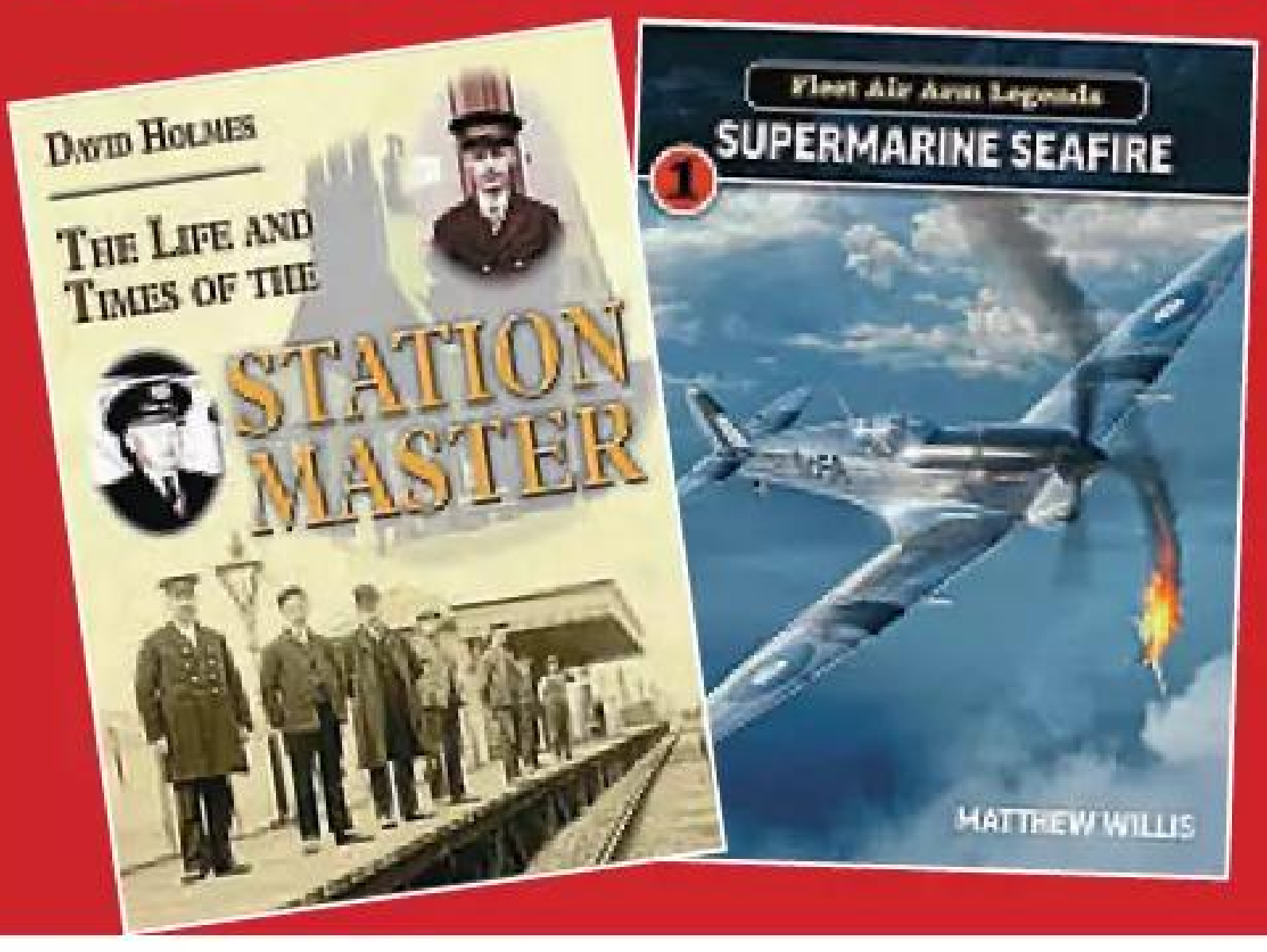
47 This Season's Must-see Events

Cover: Hever Castle & Gardens


FORTIES POST
A Salute to the '40s
THIS SEASON'S MUST-SEE EVENTS

80 SUBSCRIBE TODAY

and receive two books worth £26.98 in this great subscription offer


David Holmes
The Life and Times of the
Station Master
Fleet Air Arm Legends
1
Supermarine Seafire
Matthew Willis

The UK's top nostalgia monthly
Best of British
Past and Present
Think Again

Last Collection Time
Monday to Friday
4.15pm
Saturday
12 noon

Postbag

The Editor welcomes letters for this section. Pictures are appreciated. Letters may be edited so that we can include as many as possible

Connections and Conversations

Dear Simon,

I was very pleased to see your mention of the great James Burke (happily still with us at 88) in your editorial (March). He is a man who was able to use television to bring subjects to its audience that might have otherwise appeared off-putting, yet without dumbing them down. He often appeared on our screens from the mid-1960s, and I recall his first Connections series making a great impression on me.

Regarding Cardinal Cox's remark about Rick Wakeman also being a great raconteur, I too have found that some musicians are as interesting when they are talking as they are when playing, a few actually seeming to enjoy talking more than playing. On the other hand, some appear distinctly uncomfortable when not actually performing and forced to interact with an audience. This always seems a shame, as they may well have some great tales to tell.

All the best,
Martin Broadribb

Happy Motoring

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your interesting article on Hillman motor cars (Rootes of Success, February).

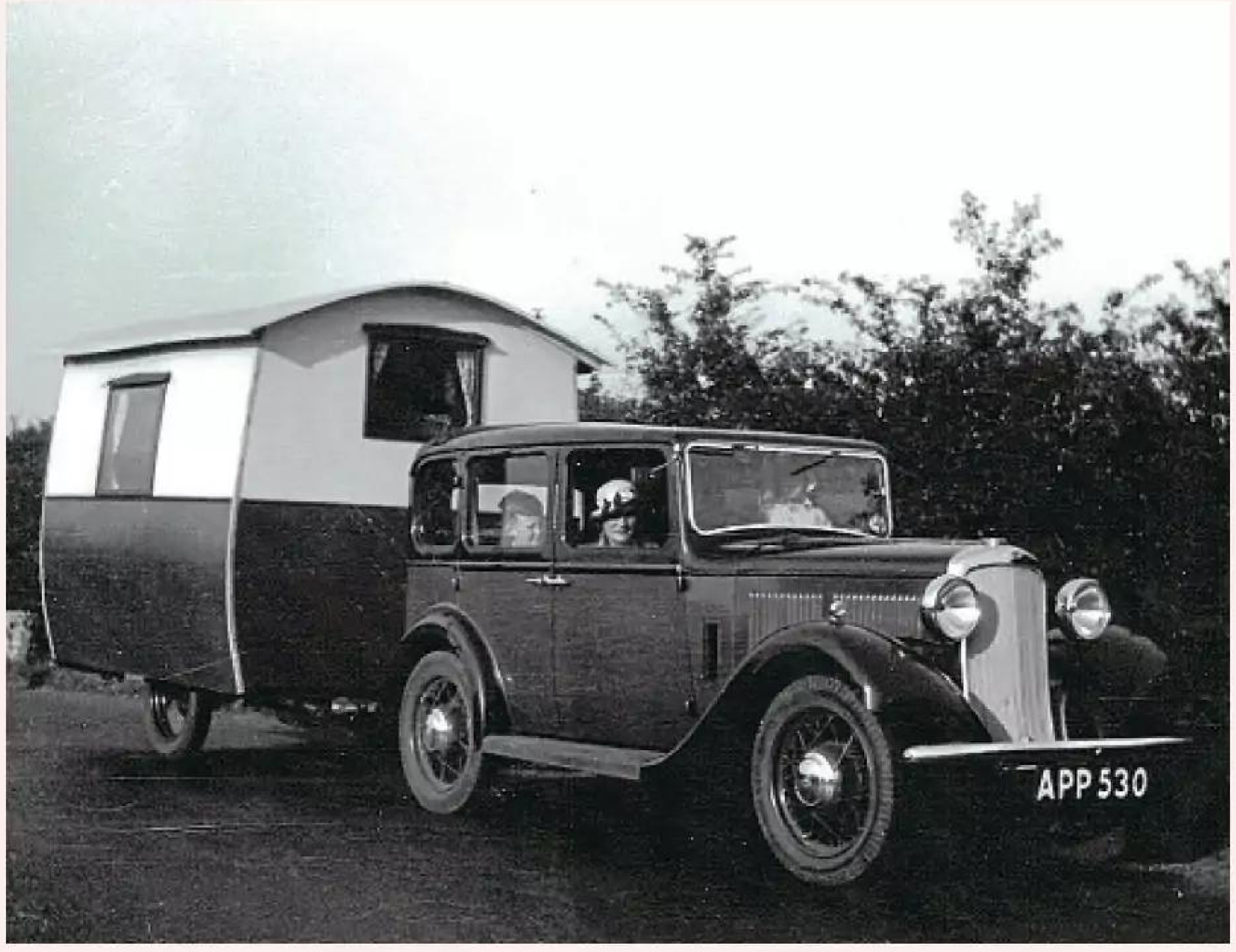
It brought back many happy memories. My first memory was of our green Hillman Minx, registration number APP 530 in the 1930s. My father owned a garage and so a car was essential. We had many happy trips in this car, sometimes he had to travel to London and, if we were free, we would go with him. If we were late coming home, then my brother and I would snuggle up to my mother on the back seat under a rug to keep warm. The car didn't have a heater, so on a cold night, a rug and hot water bottle were essential, also an ice scraper to clear the windscreen.

There was no radio, so we would sing songs on long journeys. It also had arms that shot out of each side as direction indicators as the car didn't have conventional flashing indicators. Usually, indication was made with a hand signal out of the driver's window, which was rather cold in the winter.

Like all cars then, it had running boards which my brother and I used to stand on and ride which was great fun.

During World War Two we sold the Hillman and bought a more economical Austin 7 which had a cracked windscreen, presumably my father couldn't replace it due to glass shortages. The Austin probably used less fuel but obviously wasn't suitable as it was soon sold again and our old friend APP 530 bought back.

My father built our first caravan and APP 530 would tow it to Hayling Island for our holidays. At first, we would camp on the seafront as there weren't any camping sites. Soon, a Mr Way used his field as a camping site where we would go and make lots of friends. When war broke out, we were unable to go to the seaside, so we went locally to Hurley on the Thames where we had a lot of fun playing on the river. One night, a doodlebug came over and its engine cut out over head. We sat, worried as to where it was going to land, but luckily it was in a field nearby, so all was well.



When I was about 12, I learnt to drive in this car on private land. The car had a hand choke/throttle so I could set it to a speed without using the accelerator. This was great fun, and I drove officially for 73 years having given up two years ago at the age of 91.

After the war, APP 530 was sold, and more Hillman cars were bought. When I got married, we still had Hillmans, very reliable. When we couldn't buy them anymore, we went for the good British Morris cars.

I now have my number plate APP 530 hanging in my kitchen bringing back memories.

Do keep the articles going in BoB, so very interesting.

Best Wishes
Valerie Reeves
Brocton, Stafford

Charles Trout

Crime's a 99

Dear Simon,

I joined my local supermarket, in 1984, as a part time cashier. We had a public address system by which, as cashiers, we could call for assistance for price checks, damaged products or change to name but a few.

Calls, of course, could also be made for other things. The two that bring back the fondest memories are "Customer service 99" and "Customer service 100". A 99 was for a suspected shoplifter and the 100 was for a definite shoplifter. When either of these calls went out, the male members of staff and sometimes the female members, would drop what they were doing and rush to the front of the store. They would leap over the security barriers or jump the checkouts and chase the shoplifter down the road.

If necessary, they would bring the shoplifter down and sit on them until the police arrived. In those days, the police treated shoplifting as a crime and would attend the scene. Like Colin Macleod's supermarket (Postbag: A Hidden Hero, March), we had plain clothes store detectives and I like to think they played their part in keeping shoplifting to a minimum. I still work in retail, although for a different supermarket, and unfortunately, things are very different now.

Many thanks for Best of British. I look forward to its arrival each month and the memories it invokes.

Regards
Sue Sparkes
Walton-on-Thames, Surrey

First Man in a Million

H. G. WELLS' FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
starring EDWARD JUDD · MARTHA HYER and LIONEL JEFFRIES
A CHARLES H. SCHNEER Production
TECHNICOLOR (R)
A COLUMBIA PICTURE

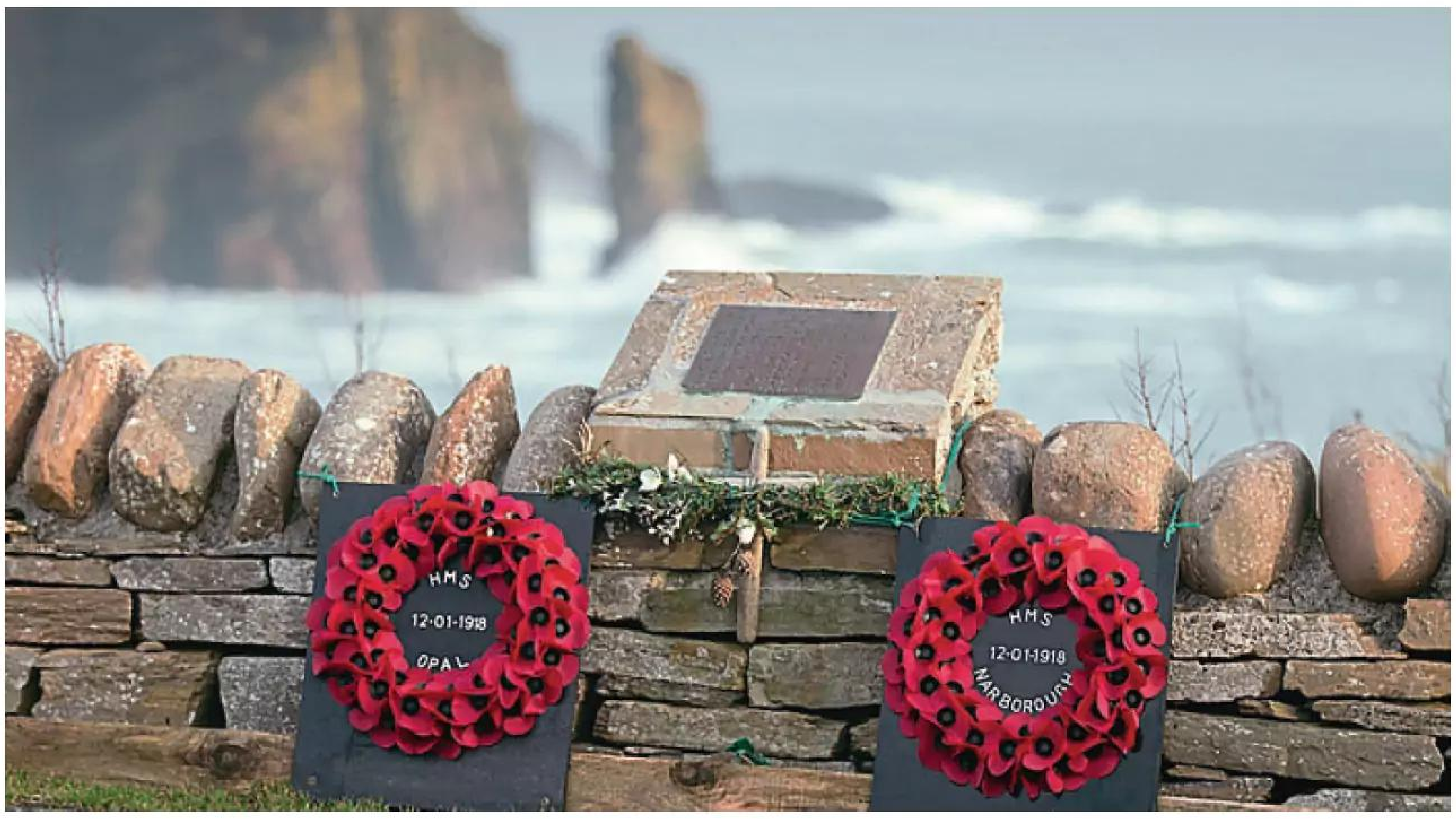
Dear Simon,

Many thanks for the bio on the actor and director, Lionel Jeffries (The Amazing Mr Jeffries, February).

To me, he will always be the scientist Professor Cavor in the 1964 movie version of HG Wells' First Men in the Moon. I once wrote to him, asking for his autograph. He sent me a photograph (since lost, sigh) he had of himself in a garden, gazing into the distance. He really went the extra mile for me. What a nice guy.

Best wishes,
John Lockwood
Washington DC, US

Reunited



Photograph: Orkney.com

Dear Simon,

I am writing to tell you of how a ship which sank in World War One reunited me with an old school friend.

There were lots of World War One events commemorated from 2014-2018 when it was 100 years since the Great War and I wrote to a local publication, the Black Country Bugle, telling them of the sinking of two ships in January 1918. The ships were HMS Narborough and HMS Opal. They were not sunk by enemy action but by Mother Nature, so I did not think they would be mentioned in the commemorations.

On 12 January 1918, the two ships ran aground in the Pentland Skerries near Scapa Flow during a violent gale and snowstorm and 188 seamen died. There was one survivor. My father's best friend Edward "Ted" Price was one of those who perished, and my father was heartbroken when he heard of the tragedy. He often mentioned his dear friend in later years.

The newspaper researched the event and printed my letter which was seen by my long lost friend. Margaret Clark and I were best friends at Broad Lanes Secondary School, Coseley, but lost touch when we were in our teens. We started work, had boyfriends, made new friends, and just drifted apart. As I had quoted my maiden name in my letter to the paper, Margaret read the article and got in touch. So, after more than 50 years, we were reunited.

We are both 80 now.

Since then, we have met up a couple of times each year and speak on the phone at least once a week. Margie lives in Kingswinford and I live in South Staffordshire and are dependent on buses to enable us to get together, usually in Wolverhampton where we enjoy a pub lunch and much chatting. Distance separates us but, after years of wondering what had happened to each other, we are best friends once again.

I am so glad that I wrote that letter to a local weekly publication which enabled me to meet up with my very dear friend.

Pat Lilley
Bilbrook, South Staffordshire

SSAFA, So Good

Dear Simon,

On 14 February 1885, several British newspapers published a letter from Major James Gildea asking the public to support the wives, widows, and children of soldiers and sailors who were killed or wounded through service to queen and country.

This was the founding of The Soldiers', Sailors', and Families' Association, which in 1919 added airmen to its title, and later became SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

Marking its 140th anniversary in 2025, SSAFA has come a long way since that letter. It has a volunteer and staff network covering much of the world, and a rich history of service helping around 54,000 people annually.

To commemorate this, I am inviting your readers to contribute to our archive. They can send stories, photos, video messages, or anything that highlights their or a family member's experience of SSAFA as a volunteer or as a beneficiary, and from any time.

Submissions may be sent to 140.anniversary@ssafa.org.uk

Yours sincerely
Air Marshal Sir Simon Bollom KBE, CB, FREng
National Chair
SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity
4 St Dunstan's Hill
London
EC3R 8AD

Swap Shop

Dear Simon,

I began reading the February issue with Treasures in the Attic, which brought back memories of buying Brooke Bond tea and collecting dividend stamps. Why was shopping then so much more fun than now? We looked forward to having enough to exchange for something we wanted. Who could forget Green Shield Stamps and a special shop to exchange them in?

Also in Treasures in the Attic, I remember Robin Starch which my mum used to use, and her bird pastry pie. She had several of those pie funnels. Did they make the pies taste better?

I also enjoyed the interview with former actor Gary Warren (The Railway Child). I loved The Railway Children and I also went to the cinema (a rare occurrence) to see the wartime set sequel. Maybe I'm still a child at heart despite being nearly 90.

On the Food & Drink pages, Don Alcott's letter about banana bread caught my eye. I still make this tasty loaf for the vegetarian lunch to which I sometimes go. You don't have to go to America, Don.

Colin Baker's Back in Time column reminded me of when I was small and my dad had an Austin 7. On Sunday afternoons, the family, with me sitting on Mum's lap, went down for a drive towards Albury or Shere in Surrey (pictured). We didn't always get there as quite often the car broke down, either there or on the way back, and the RAC man had to tow us home.

Maisie Dance
Purley, Surrey

AL
GUI
LEIGH
RSH

Four girls and Dad on the way to Albury.

Ringo's the Star

Derek Deadman, pictured right, and Windsor Davies really seemed to spark off each other in the sitcom Never the Twain.

Dear Simon,

I was delighted to see the mention of Never the Twain in March's Retro TV Times and Derek Deadman in Twenty Questions on the Puzzles page in the same issue. Surely one of Thames Television's longest-running sitcoms at 11 series across 10 years, Never the Twain was one of my favourite television programmes in the 1980s and ITVX has enabled me to enjoy it all over again over the past year.

Donald Sinden and Windsor Davies were a formidable partnership as the two lead characters but the success of the show was not just down to superb acting by the duo but also great writing and superb performances by the supporting cast, including Derek Deadman as dim-witted shop assistant Ringo, "helper" to Oliver Smallbridge (Windsor Davies).

I still remember from 35-40 years ago my disappointment when it became clear Ringo was not going to be in the episode as the best ones always featured him. Derek Deadman appeared in 40 of the 67 episodes, with just the one appearance in series one, and then either two or three appearances in each of the next five series. After five appearances in series seven, he was back down to one in the following series, finally becoming a permanent fixture for the last three series. Most of Derek's scenes were with Windsor Davies and they really seemed to spark off each other. It was noticeable that any scenes he had with Donald Sinden did not enjoy the same rapport.

All in all, Never the Twain was a fantastic show and it's great that all 67 episodes are available on ITVX as sadly some sitcoms of the same era are either not there at all or have only a limited number of episodes to watch.

The mention of colour and black and white television sets from David Rudman in The Collector (February) reminded me of when my parents' black and white television set gave up the ghost well into the 1980s. It was a Sunday afternoon and the three of us were watching an episode of Bonanza. Little Joe had just galloped on to screen when the set packed up. It was only then that my parents bought a colour television set. Never did find out what happened to Little Joe in that episode of Bonanza.

Jon Harris

Photograph: ITV

Can you help?

I am trying to find a Jeff Green, my first husband's brother, from Woking in Surrey. My first husband (Les) and his other siblings are all deceased as far as I know, but it would be nice to catch up with Jeff if he is still around, presumably no longer in Woking. He was married to Jenny, with at least two children, but I know they were divorced (in the 1970/80s) and he remarried some years later. Would be in his early 70s, I think. I was then Doreen Green.
Dee Gordon, 34 Waters Edge, Shorefield Road, Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7RH Email: deegordon@btinternet.com

Wanted: 78rpm records by Bob and Alf Pearson, Vera Lynn, Steve Conway, Jessie Matthews, and Elsie and Doris Walters, including vocal refrains with dance bands etc.
Theo Morgan, Tel: 07990 072700 Email: theo.morgan@gmail.com

I would like some penfriends to write to who like classic reggae, calypso, ska and world music. I'm aged 60 and would also like to write to people who like classic television, drama and comedy films, and like listening to Radio Caroline.
Colin Griffiths, 5 Chaston Place, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN16 9TF

Is there anyone out there who took part in the Essex Senior Scout 4th European Expedition to Germany in the summer of 1959? If so, I would love to hear from you; I have a number of photos but no other paper records of our first ever visit abroad.
David Sansom, Email: davidwsansom@yahoo.co.uk

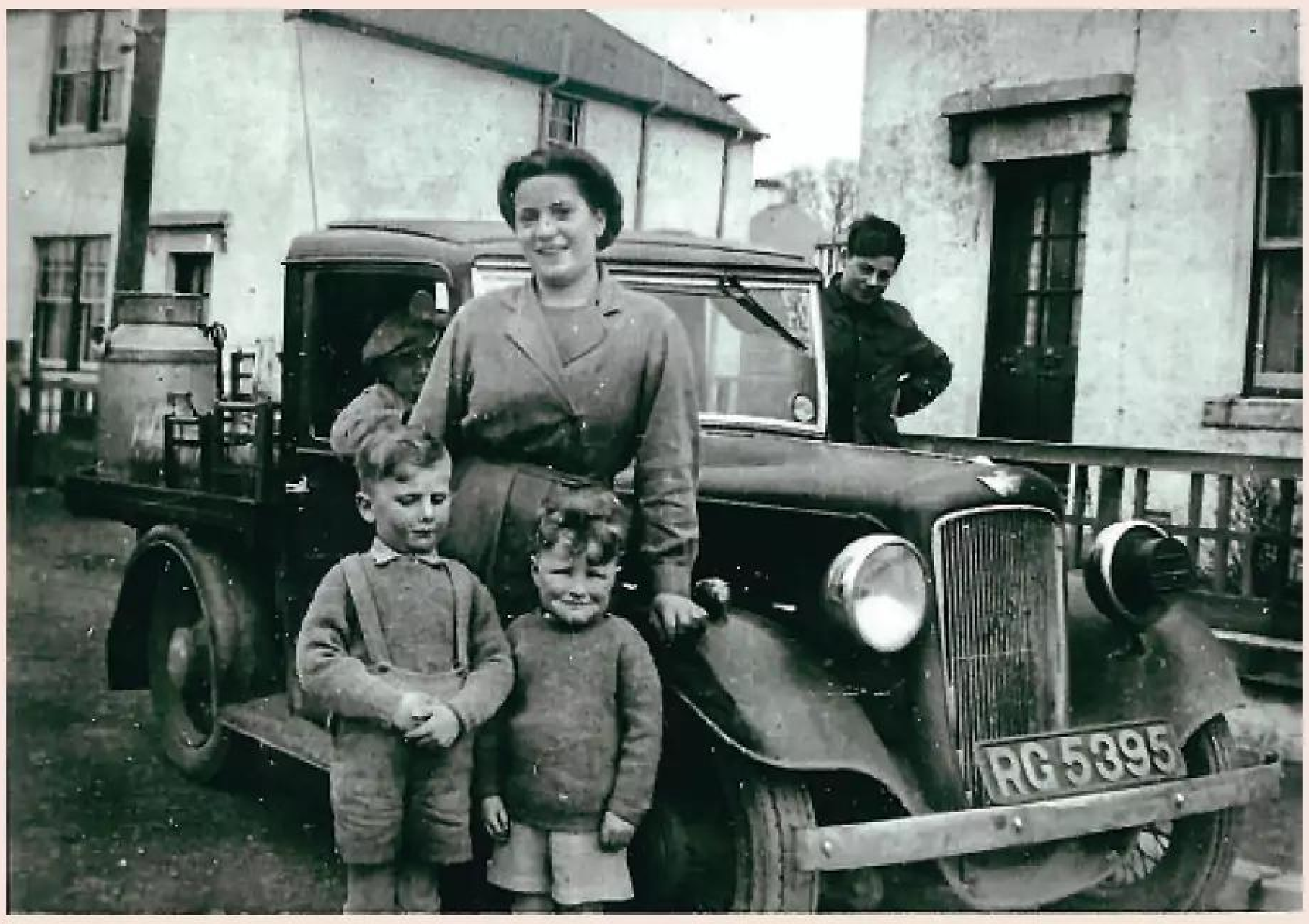
Does anyone have any information of a Dutch football team called KMVZ, a club from Amsterdam. In particular, there was a tour hosted by KMVZ and including my local team, Barkingside FC, in 1966, along with Witney FC. Any information on KMVZ and this tour would be greatly appreciated.
Rob Meyers, 123 Ashurst Drive, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1HA

Information and photos are sought on the families who once lived in the Layerthorpe area of York, an area that has changed beyond recognition. If you once resided or worked in this area or had relatives who did, we are looking to add to our archive and at the same time preserve these photos for future generations.
Jane Burrows – Tang Hall Local History Group, Tel: 07522 402945 Email: tanghallhistory@gmail.com

I would like to hear from anyone who attended the T Rex concert at Hastings Pier Pavilion on 25 July 1975. Programmes from this or other Rex gigs would also be invaluable as well as information about the running order of songs. If anyone has an original ticket available, I would welcome it, having lost mine many years ago.
David Rudman, 8 Carramup Circle, Port Kennedy, Western Australia Email: davidjon4@gmail.com

Requests for information, friends and family searches and reunion announcements can be included here free of charge. Send any requests, written as concisely as possible, to Can You Help?, Best of British, Mortons Media Group Ltd, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6JR or by email to info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk

Turriff-ic



Dear Simon,

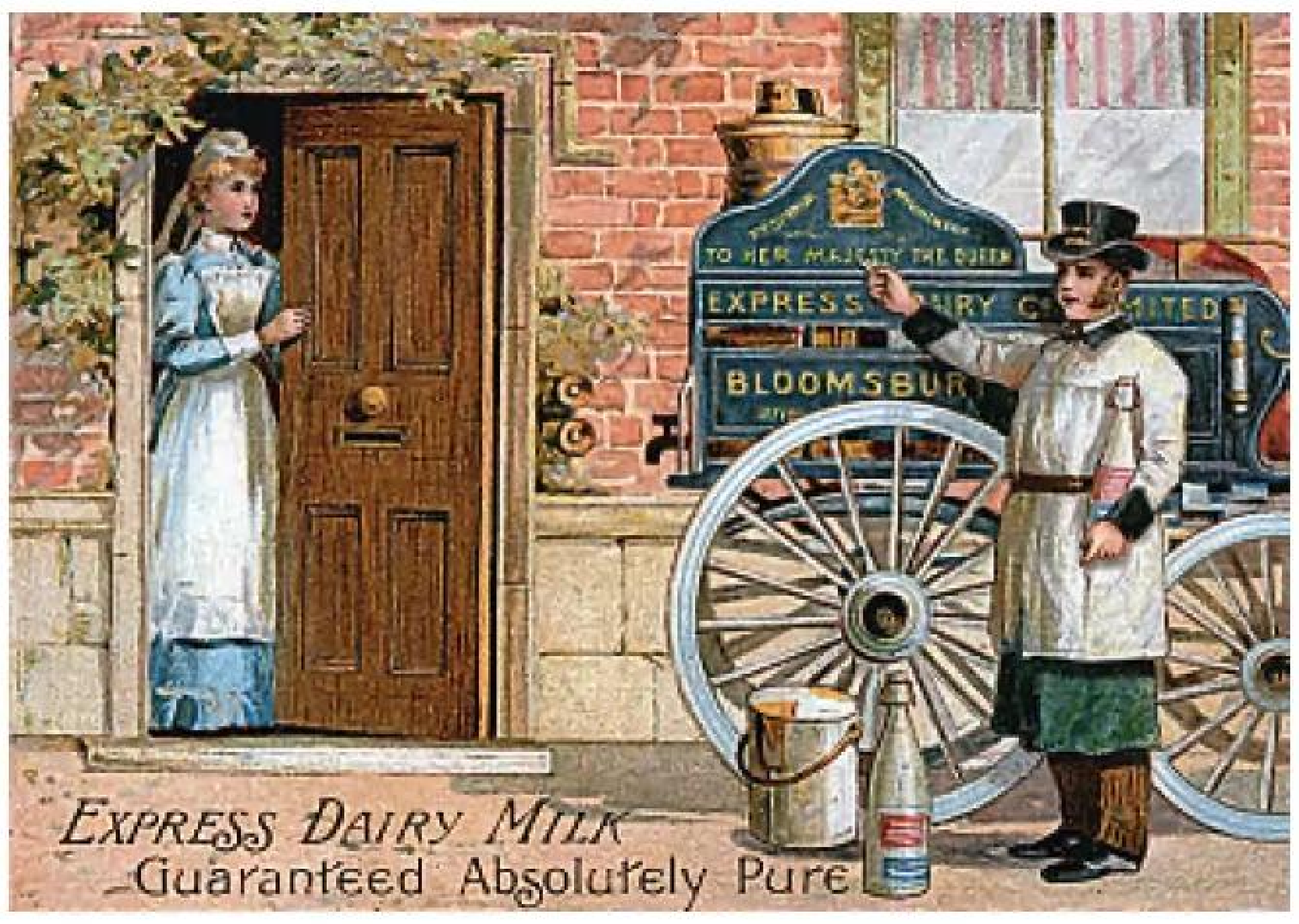
I did enjoy reading Neil Hewitt's memories of being a milk monitor (Yesterday Remembered: Monitoring the Milk, January). In fact, it made me have a look in the old photo albums for a photograph of milk being delivered in the 1940s. I found the photograph I was seeking of the milk "float" delivering milk in Turriff, Aberdeenshire in 1943-44.

I'm the wee chappie in front of the float standing next to my next-door neighbour Dugald. You can see on the back of the float the churn filled with milk. The woman (whose name I can't remember) had a very long-handled ladle which was used to get the milk out of the churn. I recall it was measured to distribute one pint of milk. She ladled it into whatever my mother provided and that is the way milk was distributed then (at least it was where I lived). You must remember this was when World War Two was raging and things were different.

Thank you, Simon (and Neil). The articles in Yesterday Remembered in particular and Best of British in general so often remind me, and people like me, of that "make do and mend" period in life. We survived – and that was all that mattered.

Colin Macleod
Beauly, Inverness

"Fragrant" in Finchley



Dear Simon,

I did enjoy reading the Yesterday Remembered article by Neil Hewitt headlined Monitoring the Milk in the January issue. When I was very young, I could not wait until the school holidays when I would go and help our local milkman. The very sound of the horse's hooves and the rattle of the milk crates was music to my ears as he appeared in the distance. When he had finished the round, the horse would wander on to a green and the milkman would disappear into a pub opposite.

Many years later, my first job was for Express Dairies, a big milk company at that time. They had many outlets and big depots where I would go delivering produce. There was also another job that I would do, being the youngest and last starter. I would go out with the lorry to Finchley, north London where we would fetch a load of manure from the big stable that Express Dairies had.

After I had loaded the lorry, we would start back and, on the way, pop into a cafe for our dinner. Believe it or not, we were never stopped from eating there. I don't know why as my mother could always tell when I had been to Finchley when I got home after work.

Yours
Bobby Knottley
Newthorpe Common, Nottingham

Fox Sake

Dear Simon,
Have a look at the foxes in my garden. Before you say: "Don't they look cute", let me tell you a little about them.

When I had the internet installed, the supplier put a cable across the garden from the road to the front room of my house to where I have my computer and telephone hub, and then another cable along the side of the house and up the wall to my bedroom where I have an additional TV that I can watch before going to sleep.

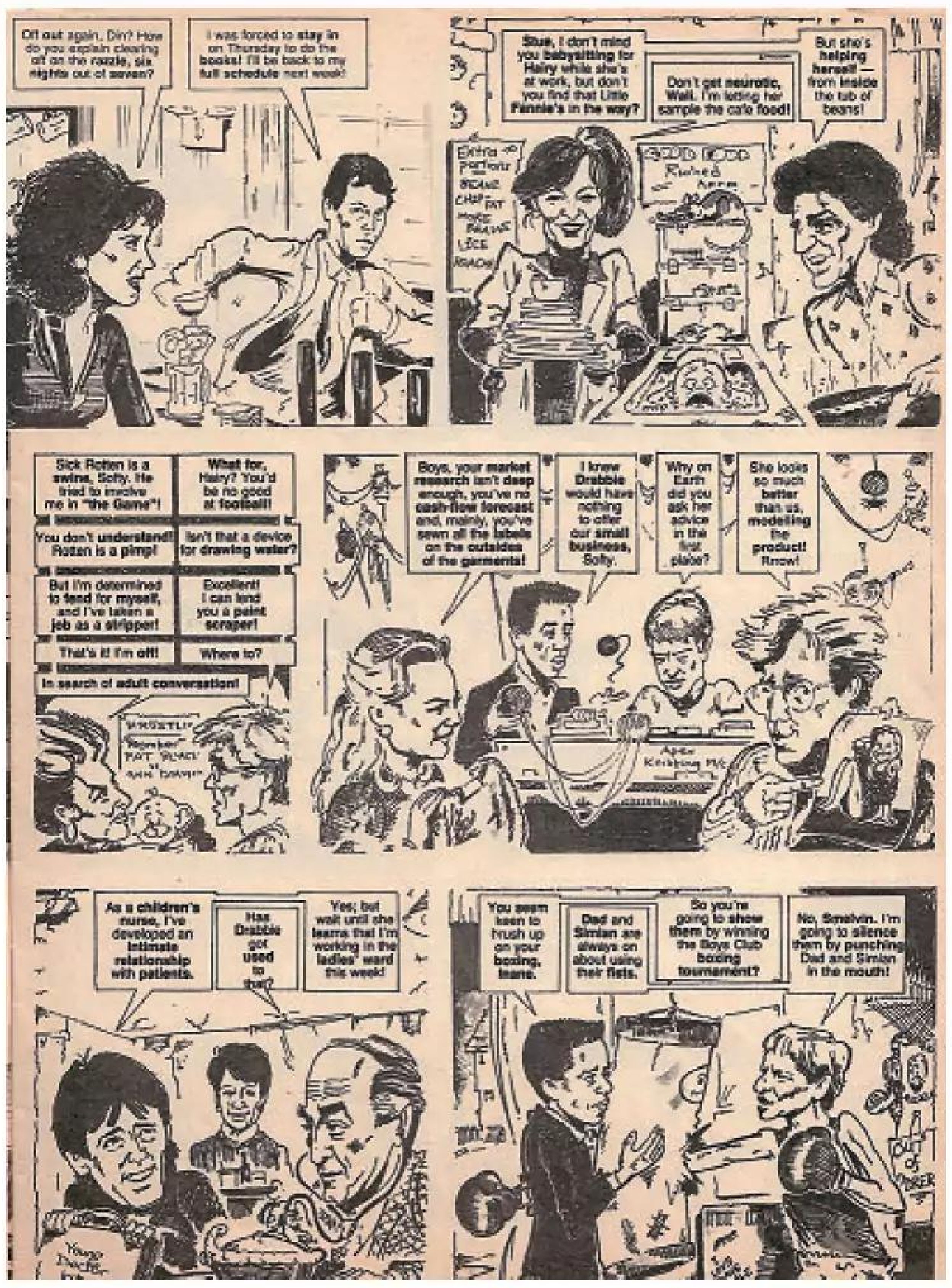
The first thing that happened was that someone who does some gardening for me accidently snipped through to cable while working away pruning bushes. I got that fixed and then the foxes found the wire and chewed it. The internet provider couldn't understand this. It's got no nutrition in it he said. It was repositioned several times and, on the advice of a friend, I smeared the cable with mustard. He said his dogs didn't like mustard so perhaps that would work. I also left some surplus cable on the garden for the foxes to play with on the assumption that that was what they were doing rather than trying to eat it.

I went on holiday and asked my neighbour to keep an eye on the house. He did and when I came back, he said he'd had to put some cable in my refuse because some youths must have thrown it over the wall. I put some more loose cable down.

It's been OK for a while now, so I'm hoping the problems are behind me. If you still think that foxes are cute, would like them in your garden? If so, you are welcome to them.

Don Alcott
Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands

Top of the Bill


Off out again, Din? How do you explain clearing off on the razzle, six nights out of seven?
I was forced to stay in on Thursday to do the books! I'll be back to my full schedule next week!
Stue, I don't mind you babysitting for Hairy while she's at work, but don't you find that Little Fannie's in the way?
Don't get neurotic, Wall. I'm letting her sample the cafe food!
But she's helping herself — from inside the tub of beans!
Sick Rotten is a swine, Softy. He tried to involve me in "the Game"!
What for, Hairy? You'd be no good at football!
You don't understand! Rotten is a pimp!
Isn't that a device for drawing water?
But I'm determined to fend for myself, and I've taken a job as a stripper!
Excellent! I can lend you a paint scraper!
That's it! I'm off!
Where to?
In search of adult conversation!
Boys, your market research isn't deep enough, you've no cash-flow forecast and, mainly, you've sewn all the labels on the outsides of the garments!
I knew Drabble would have nothing to offer our small business, Softy.
Why on Earth did you ask her advice in the first place?
She looks so much better than us, modelling the product! Rrrow!
As a children's nurse, I've developed an intimate relationship with patients.
Has Drabble got used to that?
Yes; but wait until she learns that I'm working in the ladies' ward this week!
You seem keen to brush up on your boxing, Ieans.
Dad and Simian are always on about using their fists.
So you're going to show them by winning the Boys Club boxing tournament?
No, Smelvin. I'm going to silence them by punching Dad and Simian in the mouth!
OUT OF ORDER

Dear Simon,

Despite having been a loyal reader of BoB for around 15 years, I foolishly missed your 30th anniversary issue (November) and had to send for it.

This proved worth the wait by featuring the ever-attractive Hannah Gordon (Loving Hannah). For me, her first definitive role was the 1972 Bafta-winning sitcom My Wife Next Door, written by Richard Waring and co-starring John Alderton, in which a newly divorced couple move to the country, only to find that they now occupy adjoining cottages.

A workmate commented in 1979 that Kenny Everett (In the Best Possible Taste, December) made the most of his medium – meaning television – and I agree with him. At school in the 1960s, a friend who was a fan of Kenny and Cash on Radio London sent a letter, asking if KE could write something for our "pirate" school newspaper. Everett wrote back, asking us to give him a few weeks. "Yeah, right," I thought, but Kenny was as good as his word and sent his written submission. I have always believed that, with such early attention to his fans, Kenny deserved his later success.

The window cards (Top of the Bill) in your January issue, in poster format, are imbued with such atmosphere. I actually saw the 1964 pop tour with Brian Poole, Dusty and Peter "Herman" Noone when it came to Kettering Granada. Where, now, could you watch three chart-topping acts at a local theatre on the same night?

Paul J Medford (A Spark Into a Flame, February), as one of the select band of original EastEnders, also appeared in a parody of the soap which I wrote and drew for the British version of MAD Magazine in 1985. Some twenty years later, a colleague in my "day job" recalled the spoof, and asked me to sign his copy of the issue.

Keep up the great work,
David Robinson
Peterborough, Lincolnshire

The Collector

EXPLORING SPACE
WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AUTUMN
A LADYBIRD NATURE BOOK
The Ladybird Book of TREES
The story of SHIPS
A Ladybird 'achievements' book

In the March edition of Best of British, I read with great interest about an exhibition at Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery entitled The Wonderful World of the Ladybird Book Artists. I own a collection of over 300 Ladybird books, some fiction, others non-fiction.

As a small child in the late 1960s there were always Ladybird books around our house. The earliest I recall was called Puppies and Kittens (1956). Over my childhood years I acquired many more of these fascinating books. Nowadays I love to look at the wonderful pictures that accompany the texts. These exquisite illustrations are instantly familiar to me, even all these years later. Titles that are really special to me are:

The Story of Ships (by Richard Bowood, illustrated by Robert Ayton), Exploring Space (by Roy Worvill, illustrated by B Knight and B H Robinson), The Ladybird Book of Trees (by Brian Vasey-Fitzgerald, illustrated by S R Badmin) and What to look for in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter (Four books by E L Grant Watson, illustrated by CF Tunnicliffe).

With Ladybird books there was a title for everyone in the family. My older brother was interested in birdlife and historical figures, whereas I preferred space and rockets.

Our own children have enjoyed these books too. I don't feel my Ladybird books are valuable money-wise, but they are of great nostalgic value. You can't put a price on that. I now need to book a train ticket to Peterborough.

Lyndon Parker,
Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

The Retro TV Times

Classic television on **Freeview, Satellite, Cable and Online**

Talking Pictures TV
talkingpicturestv.co.uk

SKY 328 | FREEVIEW 82
FREESAT 306 | VIRGIN 445

Just William's Luck (1948)
(Tuesday 1 April, 7.30am)
Comedy. Director: Val Guest. Starring: William Graham, Garry Marsh and Jane Welsh. Based on the popular books written by Richmal Crompton. While playing in a "haunted house", William and his gang, the Outlaws, stumble across a group of fur thieves.

The Small Voice (1948)
(Wednesday 2 April, 12.15pm)
Drama. Director: Fergus McDonell. Starring: Valerie Hobson, James Donald and Howard Keel. A couple come across a car crash where they discover that the occupants are armed.

Devil's Bait (1959)
(Thursday 3 April, 6.20pm)
Drama. Director: Peter Graham Scott. Starring: Geoffey Keen, Jane Hylton and Gordon Jackson. A baker leads police on a frantic search for the unlucky owner of bread accidentally laced with poison.

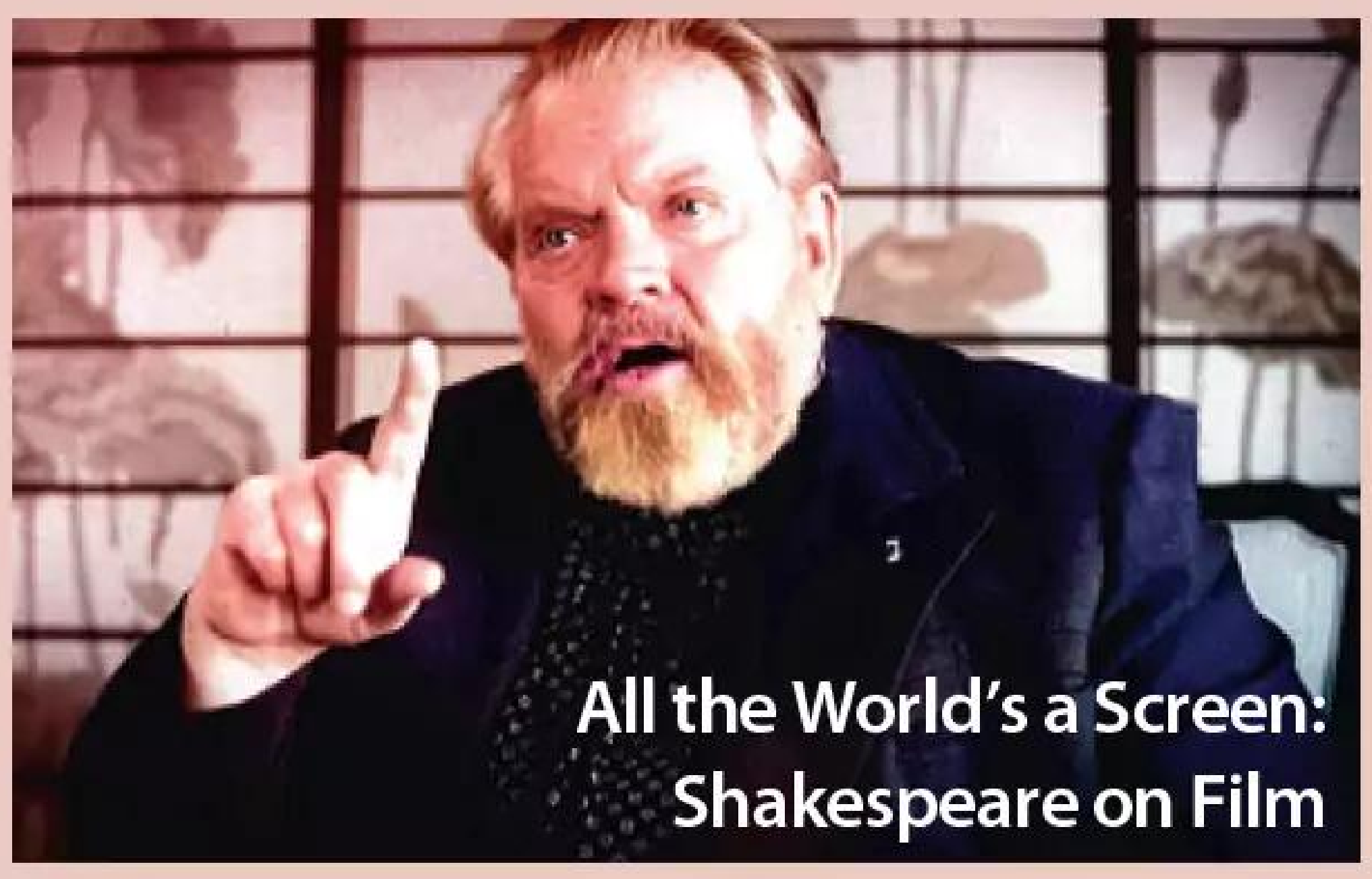
Runaway Railway (1965)
(Saturday 5 April, 10.25am)
Adventure. Director: Jan Darnley-Smith. Starring: John Moulder-Brown, Kevin Bennett, Leonard Brockwell, Sydney Tafler and Ronnie Barker. A group of children reopen an old branch line while foiling a gang of crooks.

Constellation Film Ltd. presents
VALERIE HOBSON, JAMES DONALD, HAROLD KEEL in "THE SMALL VOICE"
with Joan Young, Michael Balfour, David Greene.
Produced by ANTHONY HAVELOCK-ALLAN
Directed by FERGUS McDONELL
A Constellation film
A British Lion Release
Cert. "A"

The Big Job (1965)
(Sunday 6 April, 9.05am)
Comedy. Director: Gerald Thomas. Starring: Sidney James, Sylvia Syms, Dick Emery and Joan Sims. A gang of crooks are caught on a big job. Fifteen years later they find their loot is now buried under a police station.

Train of Events (1949)
(Sunday 6 April, 6pm)
Drama. Director: Sidney Cole, Charles Crichton and Basil Dearden. Starring: Jack Warner, Susan Shaw and Gladys Henson. Four different stories are told in flashback as a train is heading for a crash into a stalled petrol tanker.

iPLAYER
bbc.co.uk/iplayer


All the World's a Screen: Shakespeare on Film

Arena
All the World's a Screen: Shakespeare on Film From the silent days of cinema, Shakespeare's plays have often been adapted to the big screen. For the first time in a single documentary, Arena explores the rich, global history of Shakespeare in the cinema, with a treasure trove of film extracts and archival interviews with their creators.

Early Doors
Sitcom series set in a Manchester pub. Fag ends in the urinals and the arrival of temporary traffic lights cause chaos in The Grapes.

First-Year Flashbacks
"Good afternoon, everybody. How are you? Do you remember me, Jasmine Bligh?" First transmitted in 1946, these are highlights of the films shown on BBC Television since it reopened after a seven-year gap caused by World War Two.

itvX
itv.com

George and Mildred
George and Mildred Roper plan a move to middle class suburbia. Mildred is anxious to impress, but George is happy to remain working class.

The Sweeney
DI Jack Regan (John Thaw) and George Carter (Dennis Waterman) have a simple mission, to catch villains – and they don't care if they have to tread on their superiors' toes or ignore police procedure to do it.

Man About the House (1974)
Comedy film based on the hit sitcom starring Richard O'Sullivan. Robin, Chrissy, Jo and the Ropers battle an unscrupulous property developer threatening their homes.

Photographs: (*Shakespeare on Film*) BBC

LEGEND

FREEVIEW 41, SKY 148, FREESAT 137, VIRGIN 149

Doomwatch (1972)
(Sunday 6 April, 7pm)
Dr Del Shaw (Ian Bannen), part of the government’s investigative environmental organisation Doomwatch, travels to the island of Balfe to examine the potentially adverse effects of a recent oil spill. The villagers are all suspicious of Shaw, especially the menfolk, who seem to have transformed into near-Neanderthals. After teaming up with a local teacher (Judy Geeson), Shaw discovers that the transformation of the men is due to a disease called acromegaly.

Biggles (1986)
(Tuesday 8 April, 3pm)
New Yorker Jim Ferguson (Alex Hyde-White) is spontaneously transported back in time to the skies of 1917 and finds himself in the middle of an aerial battle during World War One. It transpires that he is the time twin of Royal Flying Corps pilot James “Biggles” Bigglesworth (Neil Dickson), meaning that whenever one of them is in trouble, the other is transported through time to come to their aid.

Night of the Big Heat (1967)
(Sunday 20 April, 8am)
A freak heat wave sends the temperatures soaring on a remote island. Dr Vernon Stone (Peter Cushing) and Jeff Callum (Patrick Allen) try to uncover the mysterious reason for the sudden change in climate. But the arrival of Callum’s former mistress (Jane Merrow) forces the atmosphere to boiling point and it falls to Professor Godfrey Hanson (Christopher Lee) to discover that the rising heat is the start of an alien invasion.

Night of the Big Heat

The Scarlet Blade (1963)
(Wednesday 23 April, 2.55pm)
English civil war adventure directed by Hammer veteran John Gilling and starring Lionel Jeffries and Oliver Reed. After King Charles I (Robert Rietty) is captured by roundheads Col Judd (Jeffries) and Captain Sylvester (Reed), it falls to a small group of locals, led by a character named the Scarlet Blade, to mount a rescue attempt.

U&GOLD

SKY 110, VIRGIN 124, TALKTALK 310, NOW TV

Neil & Martin’s Bon Voyage
(Tuesday 1 April, 9pm)
Men Behaving Badly stars Neil Morrissey and Martin Clunes reunite to fish for their supper off the coast of Biarritz, participate in an eccentric “festival of corn’, and travel to the peaks of the Pyrenees.

I Didn’t Know You Cared
(Thursday 10 April, 5pm)
The Way My Wife looks at Me Peter Tinniswood’s 1970s sitcom set in a working-class household in South Yorkshire. Carter (Stephen Rea) and Pat (Anita Carey) return from their honeymoon, and their mothers are keen to hear all the gossip. However, Carter’s more interested in retiring to the pub for a drink.

U&DRAMA

FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/ TALKTALK 20, SKY 143, VIRGIN 130, FREESAT 158

At Home With the Braithwaites
(Thursday 10 April, 4pm)
Lively comedy drama about a chaotic family becoming overnight millionaires, starring Amanda Redman and Peter Davison.

Taggart
(Saturday 4 April, 12.20am)
Funeral Rites Explore the mean streets of Glasgow with this atmospheric police drama series. Taggart and Jardine investigate a charred corpse and find signs of black magic.

U&YESTERDAY

FREEVIEW/YOUVIEW/BT/ TALKTALK 27, SKY 155, VIRGIN 129, FREESAT 159

Warbird Workshop
(Tuesday 1 April, 4pm)
Waterbird The epic battle to rebuild the Waterbird, the Royal Navy’s first seaplane. Filmed over 12 years, the labour-intensive project tests veteran engineer Gerry Cooper.

James May’s Toy Stories
(Monday 7 April, 9pm)
Scalextric James May continues his quest to show what is possible with old-fashioned toys – here he tries to build the world’s biggest Scalextric track at nearly three miles long.

Neil & Martin’s Bon Voyage

Watch Dave, U&W, U&Yesterday and U&Drama shows on demand with U (u.co.uk) and catch up on your favourite programmes.

Channels may be unavailable in certain regions. If you are having trouble viewing channels, go to freeview.co.uk/freeview-channel-checker or call the Freeview Advice Line on 03456 50 50 50 (Mondays to Fridays, 9am-5pm).

BRITAIN NOW

TOPICAL SNIPPETS FROM AROUND THE NATION

Summer Spectacular

The UK's biggest live action outdoor show returns for its 10th anniversary season this summer. Kynren: An Epic Tale of England (01388 436030, 11arches.com) – a breathtaking journey through 2,000 years of English history, myth and legend – is a 90-minute production performed by a thousand-strong volunteer cast and crew. Returning to its purpose-built performance space in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, from 19 July until 13 September, this year's summer season, will also feature a special celebration of the 200th anniversary of the nearby Stockton and Darlington Railway – the birthplace of the modern railway. Ranked 5* on Tripadvisor, the scale and complexity of the production, from the spectacle of the costumes and the sets to the mind-blowing stunts and flawless choreography make Kynren a must-see event.

Full of rebellions, magic, majesty, celebration and heartache, Kynren: An Epic Tale of England returns to its Bishop Auckland base for the summer.

Blue Riband

An open-air museum in Derbyshire has been presented with a Heritage Railway Association Award for the restoration of an art deco tramcar. Crich Tramway Village (01773 854321, tramway.co.uk), the home of the National Tramway Museum, was presented with the award in the Diesel and Electric Locomotion category in recognition of the restoration of the London County Council (LCC) No 1 tramcar, which is affectionately known as Bluebird. The journey to restore this striking tramcar began in June 2014, when it entered the conservation workshop at the National Tramway Museum. Over the following 10 years, a team of engineers, volunteers, and external specialists worked to bring Bluebird back to life, ensuring every detail remained true to its original design.

"This magnificent tramcar, with its art deco elegance and timeless charm, will undoubtedly be a highlight for our visitors," said Crich curator Kate Watts. "We can't wait for you to step aboard and experience a true piece of history."

Crich Tramway Village's Graham Bennett is presented with a Heritage Railway Association Award in recognition for the restoration of art deco tramcar Bluebird.

New at Newhaven

The 19th century Newhaven Fort in East Sussex has reopened following a 12-month, £7.5m restoration.

A historic landmark in East Sussex has reopened its doors following a transformative £7.5m restoration. After 12 months of closure, visitors to Newhaven Fort (01273 517622, newhavenfort.org.uk) can now explore previously hidden parts of the site including a newly accessible Battery Observation Post that offers panoramic views of the Sussex coastline. Hosting a vibrant programme of events, including workshops, guided tours, exhibitions and talks, new developments at the 19th century fort include an adventure playground, interactive exhibitions and a 1970s-themed escape room. The Romney Hut in the fort's parade square has been reclad and insulated, providing a versatile event space for school activities, weddings, community events, corporate hire and more. Following the restoration, all standard tickets will be valid for 12 months during seasonal opening hours, offering unlimited return visits throughout the year.

Photograph: (Marlborough) National Trust/Laurence Perry, (Potter) Trevor Leighton/National Portrait Gallery, London

Cheering Churchill

A painting given to Winston Churchill to lift his spirits during World War Two has gone on public display for the first time. The newly restored portrait of the 1st Duke of Marlborough, Sir Winston's ancestor and hero, has gone on display at Chartwell (01732 868381, nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell), the wartime prime minister's cherished Kent home.

Initially thought to be a 19th-century copy of an earlier painting, its poor condition, including severe flaking paint, made it difficult to clean without risking further paint loss. However, a generous donation of £25,000 has allowed for restoration and technical analysis, revealing that the painting dates to the late 17th or early 18th century, and is a version of a portrait in the Uffizi Collection in Florence, which was engraved in the early 18th century by Pieter van Gunst.

Research has shown that the painting was offered to Sir Winston on 15 February 1942, a date notable for the Fall of Singapore, which he deemed "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British History." The painting's previous owner, Lord Saltoun, was moved to donate it by a "deep personal debt to the PM", intending as a heartfelt gesture to lift Sir Winston's spirits during a particularly challenging period of World War Two. It also served as a reminder of Sir Winston's own resilience and leadership, drawing parallels to an ancestor with whom he had a great affinity.

Sir Winston Churchill's family connection to the Duke of Marlborough was widely known and was cemented further after the publication of his four-volume history of the Duke of Marlborough, written largely at Chartwell during his "wilderness years" in the 1930s. This was later cited among the works for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Visitors to Chartwell can now see the Marlborough portrait in the very setting where Sir Winston found solace and inspiration, gaining a deeper understanding of the personal struggles and triumphs of one of Britain's most celebrated leaders.

Chartwell curator Katherine Carter with the newly restored portrait of the Duke of Marlborough.

NEXT MONTH

In the May Issue of Best of British

Stand Up, Dennis Potter

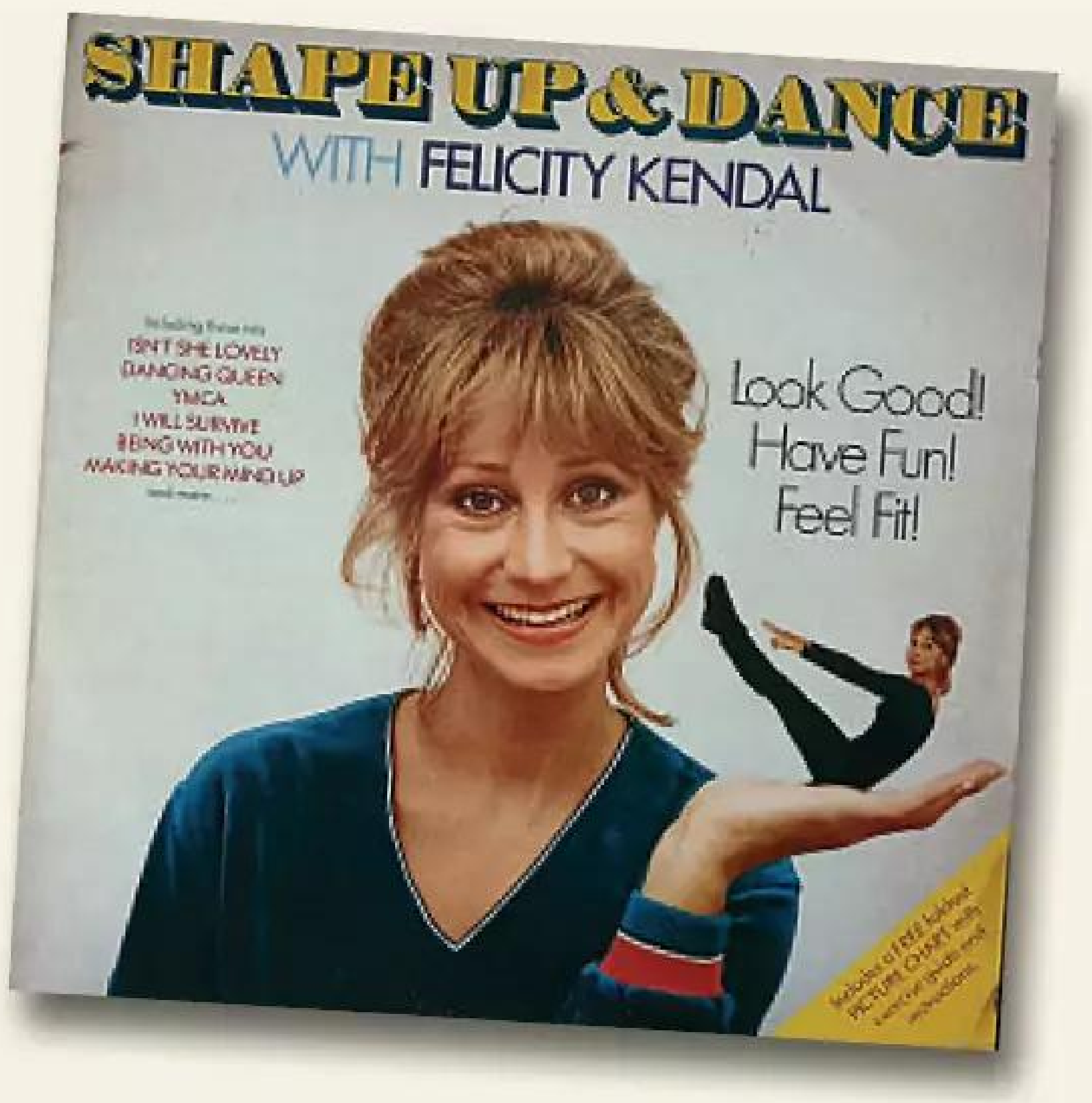
Remembering the celebrated dramatist and scriptwriter

A Lotta Bottle

Milk marketing memorabilia

Shape Up and Dance

A short-lived exercise craze



When Hull Let Her Hair Down

VE Day on Humberside

REGULARS

Your letters and memories in Postbag and Yesterday Remembered, Treasures in the Attic, Food and Drink, Window on the Past, Back in Time With Colin Baker and loads more

On sale from 24 April

Order it now

BY GEORGE

Chris Hallam pays tribute to one of the stars of George and Mildred

In August 1973, ITV audiences were treated to a new sitcom, Man About the House. The show, which had been created by Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke was based around the then risque notion of a handsome young man (played by Richard O'Sullivan) sharing a bedsit with two attractive young women (Paula Wilcox and Sally Thomsett). But engaging as this premise was, audiences soon found their attention increasingly focused on the trio's middle-aged landlords, George and Mildred Roper, who lived downstairs. Mildred was played by Yootha Joyce, while her husband, George, was portrayed by Brian Murphy. For Murphy, who died in February 2025, at the age of 92, George Roper would prove to be the defining role of his career.

Although George himself seemed older, Murphy was just 40 and making ends meet selling tickets for the Roundhouse Theatre when Man About the House first propelled him to stardom. He and Joyce had first met many years before at Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and were thus able to establish an instant rapport on screen.

"The producers didn't realise we already knew each other, and they were taken aback by the chemistry between us when we instantly fell into our roles," Murphy remembered. The Ropers themselves were, of course, total opposites. George was proudly working-class but also lazy, work-shy and thoroughly henpecked, while Mildred was the dominant one: fierce, assertive, socially ambitious and, unlike her husband, still thoroughly interested in sex. "When we performed it," said Murphy, "the audience reaction was so good and so warm that we thought, well, that's it, this is a hit. It was exciting. You looked forward to going to work."

Man About the House came to an end after six series in 1976. But the Ropers proved even more popular when starring in their very own sitcom sequel, George and Mildred (1976-79), which attracted audiences of 20 million viewers during its five series run. Mortimer and Cooke's spin-off saw the couple moving to nearby upmarket Hampton Wick where Mildred's renewed social ambitions – which included attempting to impress their snobbish next-door neighbours, the Fourmiles – were again endlessly thwarted by George with his motorbike and sidecar and socialist political opinions. "I think it was so popular because it was a universal theme, the warring husband and wife," Murphy said later. "It translates into any language."

By the end of the 1970s, it was decided that a sixth series proposed for 1980 would be the last. In fact, it never

Top: Having first met while members of Theatre Workshop, Yootha Joyce and Brian Murphy became household names thanks to their roles in Man About the House, and George and Mildred.

Photographs: Last of the Summer Wine (BBC), (Riley/Sweeney) ITV/Shutterstock, (G&M) Shutterstock

happened. Murphy sometimes referred to Yootha Joyce as his "second wife" but though he noticed her recent weight loss and had visited her in hospital, had no idea how ill she was or thar she had been drinking a bottle of brandy a day for over a decade. Her sudden, shocking death from cirrhosis of the liver at the age of 53 in August 1980 came less than a month after the release of the disappointing big screen version of George and Mildred.

Brian Trevor John Murphy had been born on the Isle of Wight in September 1932. His parents, Gerald and Mabel, became restaurant owners. His older brothers, Ken and Eric, were both killed in action during World War Two. Stationed at RAF Northwood during his own period of National Service during the early 1950s, Murphy, who had enjoyed performing one-man shows as a boy, befriended another aspiring actor, Richard Briers.

Back in Civvy Street, Murphy secured a place at Rada but was forced to drop out after a year due to lack of funds. His early performances with what was then the dramatic society of the Borough Polytechnic Institute nevertheless impressed.

"Old men, young men, odd men and drunken men, smart fellows and broken-down creatures, Brian Murphy can play them to perfection," wrote The Stage. He then applied to join Joan Littlewood's highly influential Theatre Workshop at Stratford East. "My audition was greeted by deadly silence," Murphy remembered many years later. "Then Joan Littlewood climbed up on the stage and said I was clearly talented but that, at 22, I needed a bit more experience of life." So, he was astonished to receive a telegram offering him a place a few days later.

Above: Pictured with co-stars Peter Sallis and Frank Thornton, Brian Murphy played Alvin Smedley in 73 episodes of Last of the Summer Wine. Below: Brian Murphy played Old Mother Riley star Arthur Lucan, alongside Maureen Lipman as Kitty McShane, in the Alan Plater play, and the subsequent TV movie, On Your Way, Riley.

> **"George Roper has made me a household name, I don't have to worry about how I'm going to pay the bills anymore."**

He spoke highly of Littlewood: "She never wanted you to act, she wanted you to become the person you were pretending to be. If she was disappointed or angry with our deficiencies, she'd hurl abuse at us. If she was pleased with us, she would hurl her hat in the air. She was more like a football manager than a director."

In addition to meeting the young Yootha Joyce, Murphy took roles in Oh, What a Lovely War! and appeared in the stage and film versions of Stephen Lewis's Sparrows Can't Sing (1963), which was directed by Littlewood herself. Murphy took the usual small TV roles in the 60s (The Avengers, Z Cars, Dixon of Dock Green) and played an apothecary in Ken Russell's The Devils (1971). But, by now, money was again becoming an issue.

"I had a young family, and I'd put some money into a revival of Oh, What a Lovely War! that I was part-producing, so things were a bit tight," he recalled. "I got on to my agent and said maybe I should consider selling insurance or something? Then, Man About the House fell into my lap and turned everything around." He continued to act on stage during his 70s TV heyday playing Sweeney Todd and joining Yootha Joyce to play the Ugly Sisters (Mildred and Georgina) in the London Palladium's 1976-77 pantomime, Cinderella. Richard O'Sullivan played Buttons.

Murphy's first marriage in 1957 to Carol Gibson resulted in two sons but ended in divorce. In 1995, he married Linda Regan, an actress best known for the role of the Yellowcoat April, Spike's love interest in the later series of the popular Eighties comedy Hi-De-Hi!

After George and Mildred, Murphy played a bumbling escapologist in The Incredible Mr Tanner (1981) and a driving instructor in L for Lester (1982) but neither of these sitcoms took off. Much more successful was On Your Way, Riley (1982) a stage musical by Alan Plater based on the marriage of Arthur Lucan and Kitty McShane, the couple behind Old Mother Riley and Daughter, a cross-dressing music hall and film double act of the 1930s which Murphy had once seen as a child. Murphy and Maureen Lipman reprised their roles for a TV version of the play in 1985. Murphy's performance led to a Bafta nomination.

More stage work followed: JB Priestley's When We Are Married (1986) and The Sunshine Boys (2002) with Ron Moody were among the highlights. There was also lots of TV: roles in Boon, The Bill, Casualty, Brookside, Holby City, Benidorm, children's show Wizadora, One Foot in the Grave and Jonahan Creek as Murphy moved into old age. Between 2003 and 2006, he appeared in the three Booze Cruise comedy films for ITV. His most enduring late TV role, however, was as Alvin Smedley in 73 episodes of Last of the Summer Wine between 2003 and 2010. Following the death of Compo actor, Bill Owen, in 1999, Alvin effectively took on the role of being infatuated with the formidable Nora Batty (Kathy Staff).

Murphy never retired and worked into his 90s but always remained best known for the role he had played at what turned out to be the halfway stage of his long life. A certain amount of typecasting was inevitable, but Murphy always remembered the character of George Roper fondly. "He has made me a household name and I don't have to worry about how I'm going to pay the bills anymore," he said. "I love him."

Last of the Summer Wine is available to stream via u.co.uk

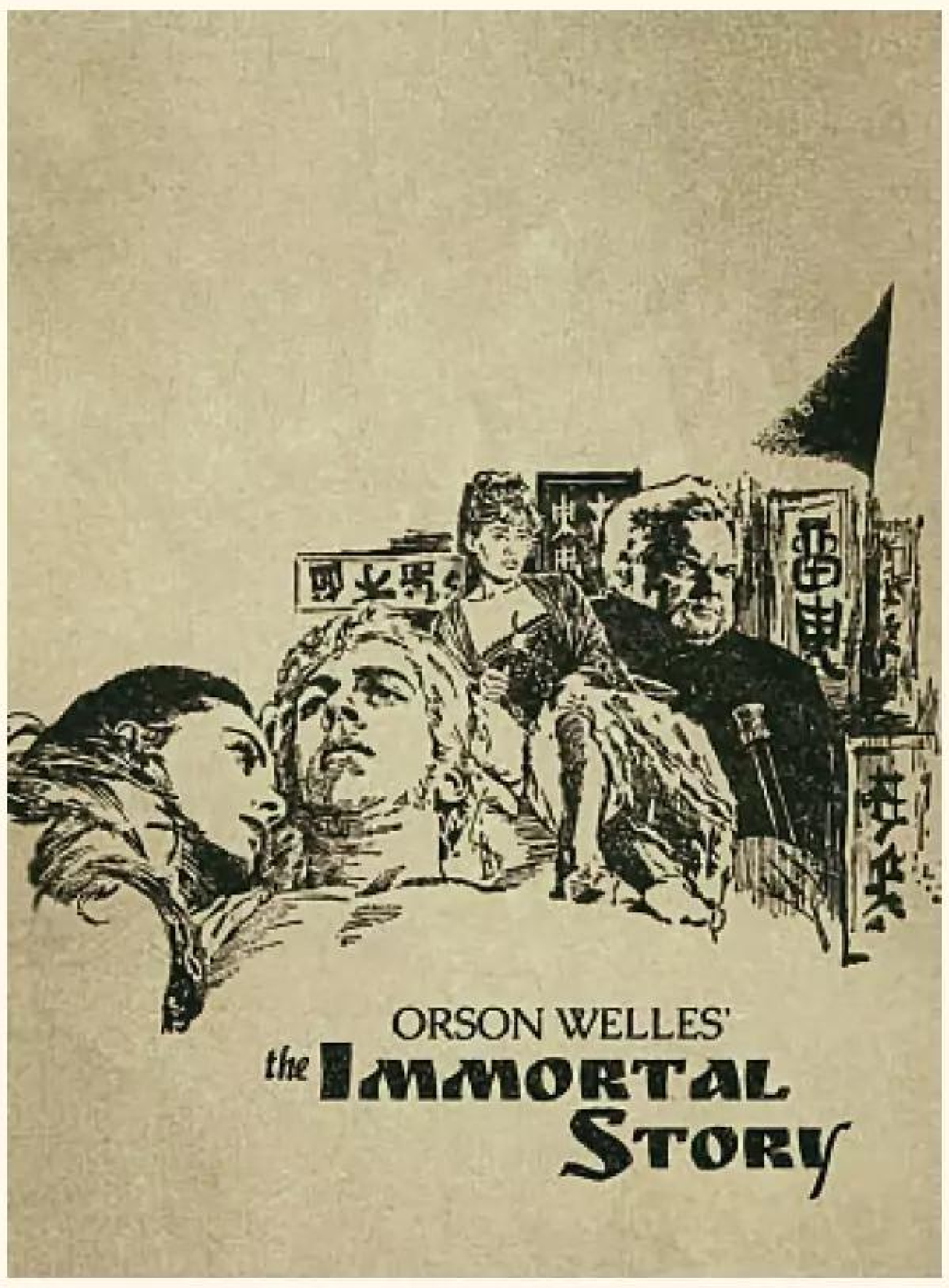
THE BOY NEXT DOOR

Simon Stabler speaks to one of Brian Murphy's George and Mildred colleagues

For most young actors, the chance of going straight from drama school to working with one of the most influential filmmakers of all time sounds like a dream come true. For Norman Eshley, who is best known as estate agent Jeffrey Fourmile in the sitcom George and Mildred, this became a reality when he received the phone call: "Orson Welles wants to see you in Madrid."

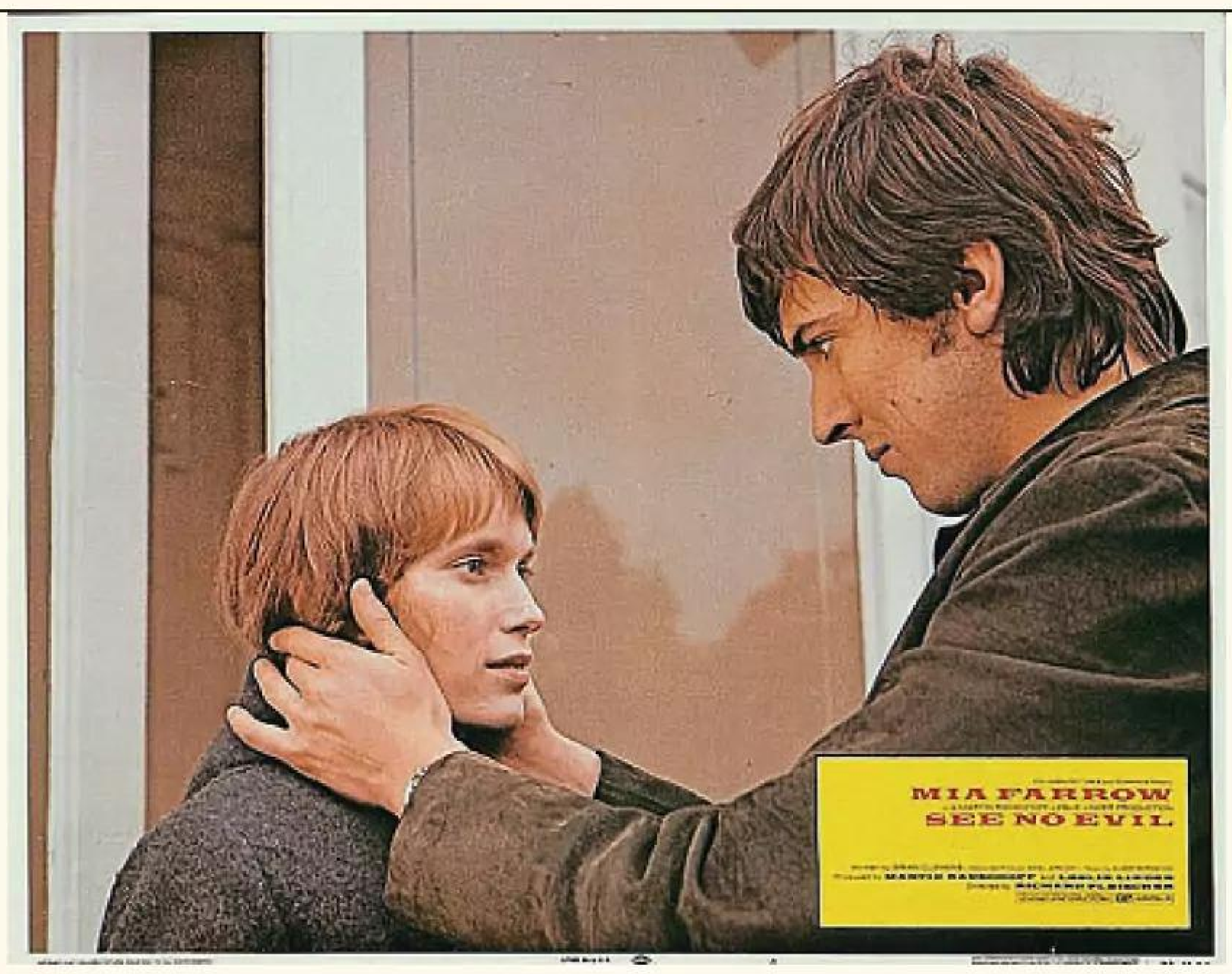
"I'd never flown before," recalls Norman. "I went to Madrid and was picked up in the car and went to meet the great man himself. I was told not to be a yes man, so when Welles started talking to me about the playwright Jean Anouilh and I knew nothing about him, I started arguing with Welles and he started laughing. He pushed a button under his desk, his staff came in and he said: 'Give the guy some dough and let him go see the town.'

"So, they took me out and said: 'You've got it.' I said: 'Got what?' I didn't know what I had, and it wasn't until I got back that the script arrived, and it was The Immortal Story, a four-handed film with Welles directing and starring,



Top: Pictured with Yootha Joyce, Norman played Jeffrey Fourmile, George and Mildred's next-door neighbour, a role he was recommended for by the title stars. Left: Straight out of drama school, Norman was cast by Orson Welles in the film The Immortal Story.

Photographs: (G&M) Fremantle Media/Shutterstock



Left: Spotted while playing Robert Dudley in the play Vivat! Vivat Regina!, Norman was cast as Mia Farrow's boyfriend in the thriller Blind Terror, AKA See No Evil. Right: Norman enjoyed playing DS Robert Hargreaves in The Sweeney episode The Taste of Fear.

Jeanne Moreau, a French actor called Roger Coggio and me. So, my first job was in bed with Jeanne Moreau, directed by Orson Welles.

“It was all down to the one teacher, and I never went and thanked him. I didn't realise until years later that I should have thanked him.”

That teacher was Herbert “Bert” Payne, “who saw something in me”, and cast Norman in plays during his junior and senior years at Bristol Grammar School.

“Then, one day, he came to me with forms for the National Youth Theatre, so I signed them and I went for an audition when they came down to Bristol. And I got in. And I was amazed.

“I went up to London and there were people like Tim Dalton, Helen Mirren, all sorts of people like that. And I just felt at home with them all. My dad didn't like me doing all this sort of thing, he wanted me to go to the bank. So, I went into the Lloyds Bank and worked with them for a while. Bert, meanwhile, set up a Bristol youth theatre, and he put on Peer Gynt, the Ibsen play, and he cast me as Peer.

“Unbeknown to me until much later, he'd invited the Bristol Old Vic School to see me there and they offered me a scholarship and, much to my father's dislike, I took the scholarship and loved it. The minute I walked through the door, these people from all over England, Wales and everywhere and one from Belgium, one from Australia, we really talked the same language, and I just felt at home.

“As a student, I'd done one play with the company called The Quare Fellow with Patrick Stewart in it. But then I also was given the contract with the Old Vic company and we toured America doing three Shakespeare plays. So, I'd left drama school at 21, and by the time I was 22, I'd done the film with Welles and three plays on Broadway. I'd had the most extraordinary start that anyone could ever, I was very lucky.”

Those three plays on Broadway were Romeo and Juliet, Measure for Measure and Hamlet, an “extraordinary” experience.

> **“Brian and Yootha effectively changed my life for the better.”**

“Moneywise, it was extraordinary as well, because I was an ASM (assistant stage manager) playing small parts and understudying two leads, and in England I was getting something like £10 a week. The American minimum was $180 a week. At three to the pound, I was getting £60 per week. I sent £20 home to Mum and Dad a week and they carpeted the house.”

Having been part of the cast of Early Morning, the last play to be banned by the Lord Chamberlain's Office, Norman played Robert Dudley in another new work, Robert Bolt's Vivat! Vivat Regina!, which made its debut at the 1970 Chichester Festival.

“It was strange doing a new play,” recalls Norman, “there is a big difference. Because people can't judge you on previous productions.”

With Eileen Atkins as Elizabeth I and Sarah Miles as Mary, Queen of Scots, Vivat! Vivat Regina! got good reviews and following a transfer to the West End, another offer of work for Norman.

“I had another of those extraordinary phone calls from my agent, who told me to go and see a guy called Richard Fleischer. So, I went along to this hotel, and he said: ‘Hey, Norman, caught your show last night, I thought it was terrific. How'd you like to do a film opposite Mia Farrow?’”

Filmed in the UK, where it was released under the name Blind Terror, a lot was riding on the success of See No Evil.

“I had a contract with the film company, and I was to make three more films, and I've never seen so many dollar signs. It was amazing, and it all depended on my notices from America. And when the notices came out, the best one said the most attractive thing in this, apart from Mia Farrow. were the horses. So that was the end of my career as a film actor, just about.”

Like many actors of his generation, Norman's early television work included episodes of the anthology series such as Play for Today, Thriller and Thirty-Minute Theatre.

“I think the one that really changed everything, a lot, was the Play for Today, written by John McGrath, it was called The Bouncing Boy. I just wish there was something like that around now for young actors, everyone wanted a part in Play for Today, they were all desperate to do it and I was lucky.

“I got the lead in one with the lovely Patricia Brake. It was a six-week shoot, and the only thing that I didn't get on very well with was the director, who said on the first day to Patricia and me: ‘You're not what I wanted, but you'll have to do.’ It was a beautifully written piece, which got rave reviews.”

A couple of years earlier, Norman appeared alongside Dudley Sutton in episodes of Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased) and Department S.

“Dudley was such a wonderful man. Oh, the stories. We played a couple of villains in a couple of things, and then he took me to a studio, and he knocked on the door when the light went down. He went in and said: ‘Where's the director?’ And he walked over, and he said: ‘My name's Dudley Sutton. This is Norman Eshley. We've come whoring for work.’ And we both got a part in a film (1969's Crossplot). He was outrageous but he was a wonderful man.”

In late 1973, the producers of the sitcom Man About the House were looking for someone to play Chrissy's (Paula Wilcox) new boyfriend, Ian Cross, "a womanising, dreadful, married man". Derek Seaton, one of Norman's friends from the National Youth Theatre who was married to Wilcox, suggested him for the role.

"I went in and did it, and I loved doing it. I was very naive; I didn't realise they'd have a studio audience. Then they asked me to play Norman Tripp, Robin's (Richard O'Sullivan) brother, who would go on to marry Chrissy."

The success of Man About the House led to two spin offs, Robin's Nest, starring Richard O'Sullivan, and George and Mildred, featuring the show's breakout characters, George and Mildred Roper, played by Brian Murphy and Yootha Joyce. Another actor had been in the frame to play snobbish estate agent Jeffrey Fourmile, the Ropers' new neighbour. However, "Brian and Yootha wanted me because we all got on so well. So, they effectively changed my life for the better."

Norman has nothing but fond memories of Brian Murphy whose recent funeral he spoke at.

"I read thousands of tributes to Brian, and everyone just said how wonderful he was. And he was. A very, very intelligent man, totally opposite to the character he played. He was very kind to me. We did a little thing on stage in Monmouth about a year and a half ago with him and Nicky (Nicholas Bond-Owen) who played my son, and just Brian and Linda (Regan) together, it was just wonderful."

I wondered if this was the first time that Norman and Nicholas had seen each other since filming.

"No, no, no, we've been in touch ever since. He's now 56, I'm nearly 80. He always sort of gives me a hug and a kiss; he's a lovely lad."

One of ITV's most popular sitcoms, George and Mildred ran for five series, plus a film which included Norman's old sparring partner Dudley Sutton in the cast. Sadly, a planned sixth series was cancelled following Yootha Joyce's alcoholism-related death.

"We had no idea that she was drinking that much. We used to go out for meals and, yes, she'd have a glass of wine and a brandy at the end of it, but we didn't realise what she was doing. There was an old actor who moved in to stay with her for a while. His shopping list was like fags every day and a bottle of brandy, and I said: 'Why on earth didn't you say something to someone?' and he said: 'Well, she was putting me up,' and that was fair enough."

At 6ft 3ins, Norman was often cast as police officers, appearing in shows such as Dangerfield, Thief Takers, and the Dawn French crime comedy Murder Most Horrid. Perhaps his most memorable police role was as the troubled DS Robert Hargreaves in The Sweeney episode The Taste of Fear.

"The Sweeney was such a wonderful script, and it was directed by a guy called David Wickes, who I still see occasionally. And John [Thaw] and Dennis [Waterman], they made you so welcome. It was a very strange feeling. It was the first time I had it, and it happened later with George and Mildred. The show belonged to everybody; it was a family. I was made to feel very welcome, and I loved doing it."

In addition to his TV work, Norman continued on the stage with roles in plays as Lady Chatterley's Lover, The Importance of Being Earnest and the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Aphra Behn's The Rover. However, a successful career was curtailed during a 1993 holiday to the Dordogne.

"I drove all the way through France and the guy whose car it was said: 'OK, I'll drive the last bit,' and this bloody great 38 tonne lorry came around the corner, it was going far too fast and smashed into us. Bill managed to pull the wheel to the right and, unfortunately, as I was in the passenger seat, I got it, and the car was thrown into a field. They cut me out from the car, I had multiple injuries and everybody thought I was going to die.

"I didn't realise at the time, I had a thing called frontal lobe syndrome and I can remember things way back to my childhood, but I can't learn new stuff. I find it very difficult when I meet new people. I tried to do a play in Nottingham, sometime after that. Martin Clunes was directing. And I got to the first night and I couldn't remember a line. And, to my shame, I walked out.

Norman credits his wife, Rachel, with turning his life round.

"But I couldn't remember, and that was the end of my stage career. I did a couple of very small parts on telly after that. But I couldn't learn new stuff. And that was the end of the career.

"I couldn't think straight, I should have gone into either directing or teaching or something. But I did the stupid thing of hitting the bottle. I had to go into rehab, eventually. And I just didn't see any future. The thing that I loved doing was taken away from me. And then, 15 years ago, I was in Bristol, living with my mother, caring for her. And I went into my local wine bar for my lunch. I met Rachel and we've been married nearly 10 years now, she just changed my life.

"I was talking to Mark Lester from Oliver! about the actors that had played the Artful Dodger. And I was driving home, and I thought: 'Well, I wonder what actually happened to the Artful Dodger.' And I looked it up, and I was 90% certain that he was transported for stealing a silver snuff box.

"I thought I knew transportation, so I looked that up, and I knew nothing. And I then wrote this screenplay called the Dreamtime of the Artful Dodger, because the Aboriginals call life dreamtime, and it's his life in Australia. And I showed it to David Parfitt, who won the Oscar for Shakespeare in Love. He was a child actor when I worked with him when I came into a series he was doing with Wendy Craig, ...And Mother Makes Five.

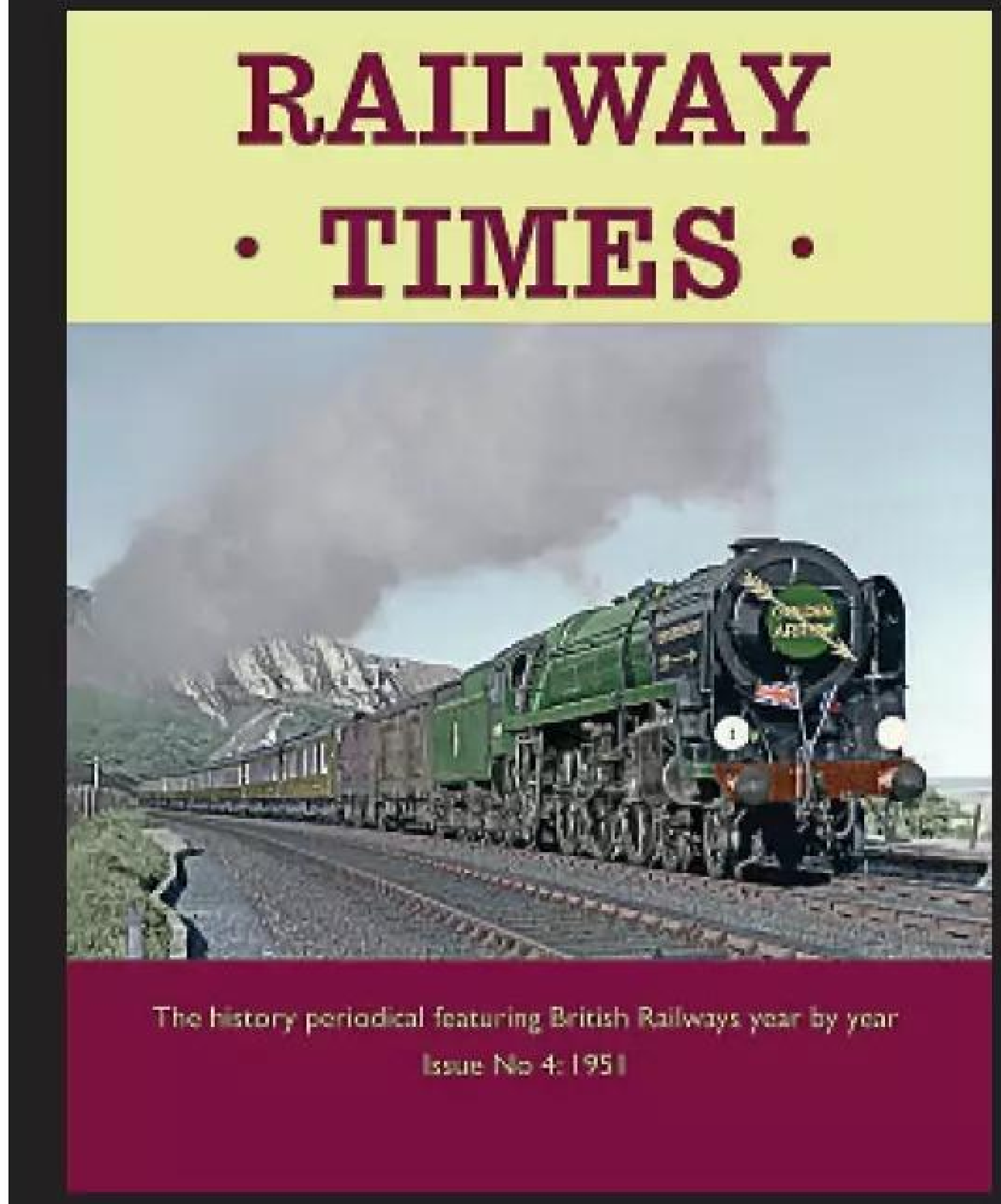
"He said this would make a great six-part series for Netflix. I got together with a friend of mine, Liz, and we wrote the book. The first company we sent it to, they published it, and it's had numerous five-star reviews on Amazon. A film company was interested but they ducked out because Disney were making a film about the Artful Dodger. But yeah, it's all there, it really would make a great series."

The Dreamtime of the Artful Dodger by Norman Eshley and Elizabeth Revill is published by Oak Tree Books (oaktreebooks.uk/dreamtime-of-the-artful-dodger)

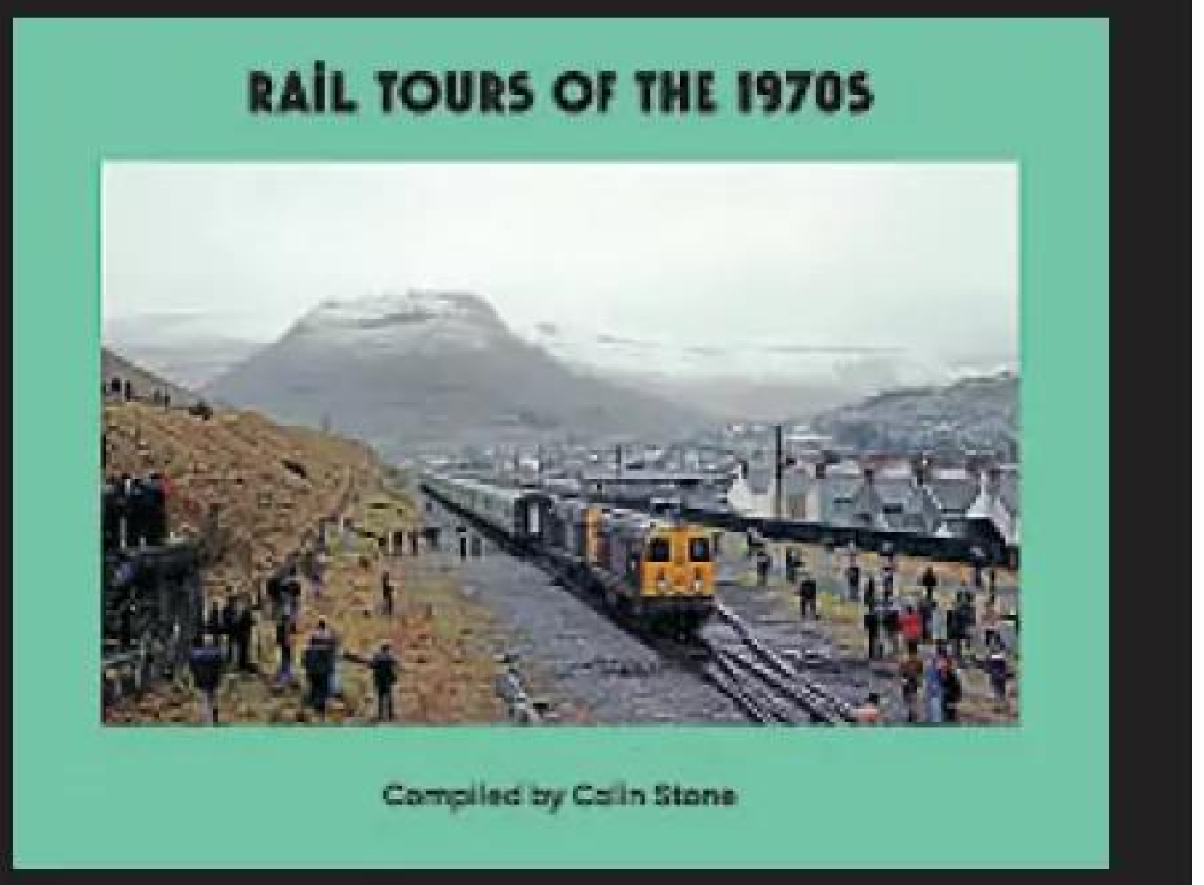
The Sweeney: The Taste of Fear is available to stream via ITVX

The Transport Treasury

Transport Treasury Publishing


RAILWAY · TIMES ·
The history periodical featuring British Railways year by year
Issue No 4: 1951

£12.95


RAIL TOURS OF THE 1970S
Compiled by Colin Stone

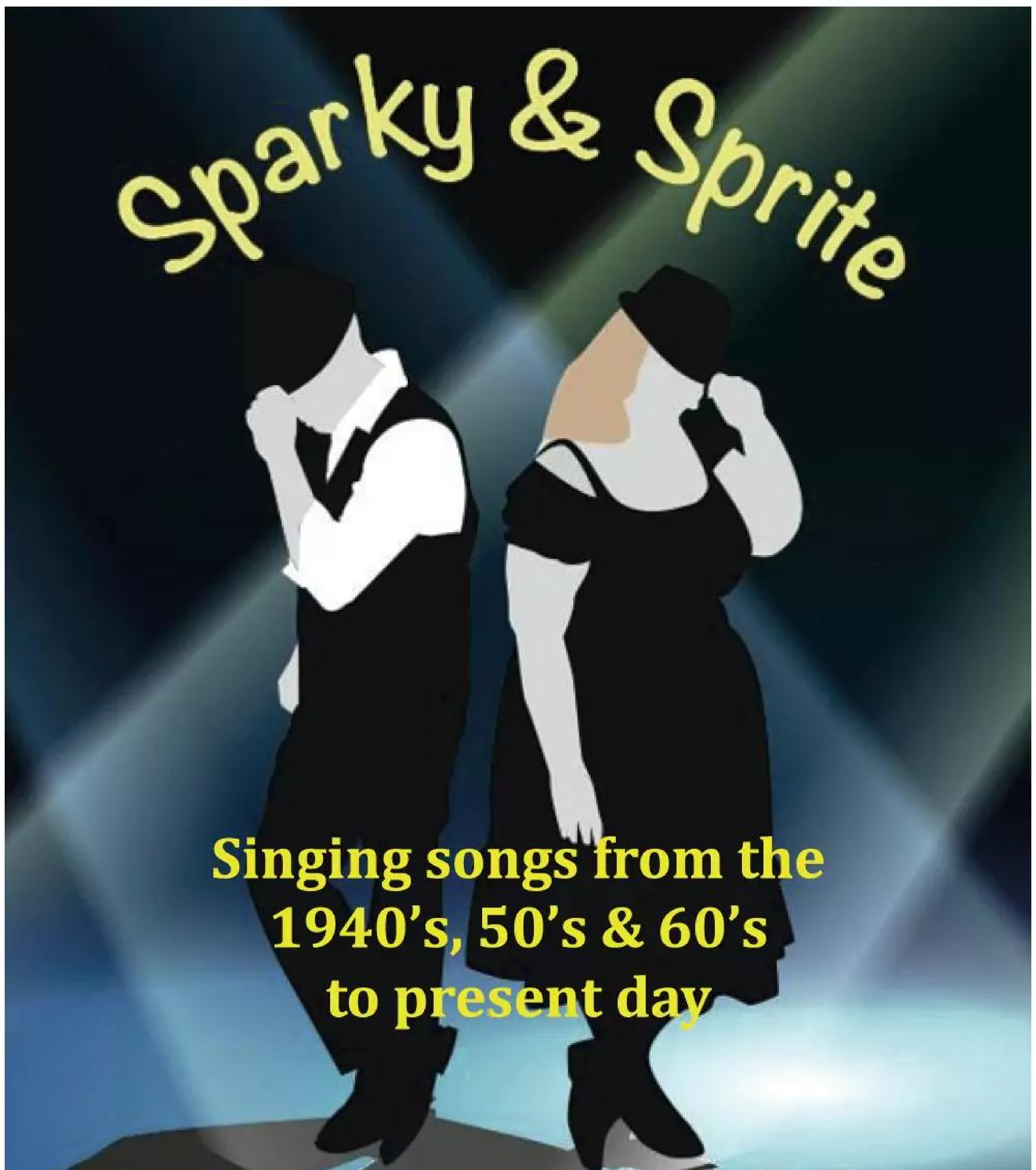
£17.50

Celebrating the A4s
Images from the Transport Treasury archive
Compiled by Hector Maxwell

£13.50

01494 708939
orders@ttpublishing.co.uk
www.ttpublishing.co.uk

Find us on Facebook @TransportTreasuryPublishing


Sparky & Sprite

Singing songs from the
1940's, 50's & 60's
to present day

An award winning and highly talented duo who perform at weddings, parties and corporate events around the country, with tailor made playlists. Their attention to detail and versatility shines through as every show has a unique slant, catering for the individual needs of each client.

www.sparkysprite.co.uk | Facebook: @SparkySpriteEnt
0797 442 6175 | info@sparkysprite.co.uk

Roamwild PestOff 2.0™

Bird Feeder

NOT JUST SQUIRREL PROOF!

Improved in every way imaginable. This Bird Feeder is a fortress against any squirrel, crow, pigeon or rat.

Hurry! Order online now for superfast delivery

www.roamwildproducts.co.uk

CREDIT CARD ORDERLINE: 0208 327 0455
During office hours only Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm excluding bank holidays

OVER ONE MILLION SOLD ACROSS THE UK AND USA

HOW IT WORKS

PORT OPEN
PORT CLOSED
INDIVIDUALLY SPRING LOADED

when anything heavier than a songbird lands on the perch it closes.

ROAMWILD GUARANTEE If you are not completely satisfied with your purchase return within 7 days for a full refund of purchase price.

Please send cheque in stamped envelope to: Oakthrift, Sevenacres, Sevenacres Lane, Maldon CM9 8HD. Please send me the following:

Item	Price	Qty	Total
1 x Roamwild™ PestOff 2.0 Bird Feeder	£34.99		
Please add £4.99 postage to complete order			£4.99
		Grand Total	£

I enclose a cheque (payable to Roamwild) for £ ______
or charge my Mastercard/Visa/Maestro/Switch. Card No: ______
Security Code (last 3 digits): __ / __ / __ Expiry Date: __ / __
Issue No (Switch/Maestro): ______ Signature: ______
Name: ______
Address: ______
______ Post Code: ______
Tel No: ______ Email: ______

GUARANTEED PATENTED roamwild
Designed in the UK
PRACTICAL • FUNCTIONAL • EXCEPTIONAL
Keeps Seed Dry

FOOD & DRINK

TASTES GONE BY AND THE FLAVOURS OF TODAY

Pork Pie Perfection

Angeline Wilcox goes to Melton Mowbray and beyond

Photograph: (Melton) Fortnum & Mason, (Peas) Creative Commons/ Man of Yorkshire

If you're feeling peckish, then sometimes there's nothing better than a traditional taste of home. Fortunately, the British menu can be relied upon to offer a fine and flavoursome feast ranging from savoury to sweet and simple to sumptuous. Whether your preference is for a hearty main course, a delicate pudding or an indulgent snack there is something to satisfy even the most demanding of diners.

One of the nation's favourite meaty morsels is the humble yet mouthwatering pork pie. It has become an essential part of picnics and ploughman's lunches, or a pleasure to be consumed on its own. Made with an appetising hot water crust pastry, these reassuringly rotund pies are filled with pork and pork fat, surrounded by a layer of succulent clear jelly.

Culinary history reveals that in medieval times, this distinctive thick pastry was used on raised meat pies as a way of preserving the filling. As with the original Cornish pasties, the pastry case was just that and wasn't necessarily eaten. Recipes from the time indicate that some meat pies contained fruit to add a sweetness to the flavour. One of the oldest English cookery books, The Forme of Cury, dating from the 14th century, mentions an extraordinary meat pie, which was also filled with sweet custards, and had a crust shaped into "battlements". It is thought this was made to impress diners at a royal banquet and was then served to guests flambeed. While not to today's tastes, feasting on this offering certainly provides food for thought.

In 1747, the English cookery writer Hannah Glasse included a Cheshire

Above: Handmade using uncured pork, the production of Melton Mowbray pork pies are protected by law.

pork pie in her recipe collection. It was filled with layers of pork loin and apple, slightly sweetened with sugar, and half a pint of white wine. However, what we would now recognise as a "proper" pork pie – in its shape and free from fruit and sweet ingredients – didn't arrive on the scene, and in another county, until later in the same century.

The Leicestershire town of Melton Mowbray has become synonymous with these delicacies because they have been made, according to a special recipe, and sold in the area since the late 1700s. It is said that they gained in popularity due to the many aristocrats and their servants who visited the county during the fox-hunting season. With three hunts active in the region – the Cottesmore, Quorn and Belvoir – seasonal demand for the pies was high. Local bakers and grocers, among them Edward Adcock, Enoch Evans and John Dickinson, soon realised that there could be a taste for their pies beyond Leicestershire and, by the 1840s, batches of them were being loaded on to stagecoaches to be sold in London. The local pie makers had hit on a winner.

Business continues to flourish and at Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe, which John Dickinson opened in the town in 1851, Dickinson & Morris pies are still baked and sold today. To safeguard and promote the interests of all the local pie makers and their precious regional delicacy, the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Association was established in 1998 and successfully campaigned for the pies to be awarded the EU's Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status in 2009. The UK Protected Food Names scheme (UKGI) also recognised them in 2021. Both assurances guarantee that the pies are made by certain producers based within a zone that includes parts of Nottingham, Northampton, Grantham and Stamford, and that they adhere to a strict recipe (without any artificial colours, flavours or preservatives) and match specific standards.

In terms of ingredients, Melton Mowbray pies contain fresh, uncured pork, which is chopped rather than minced and is then seasoned to perfection. Once cooked, the meat is grey – like roast pork – in appearance. Another essential characteristic is the hot water crust pastry, which is shaped by hand around a wooden dolly to create the distinctively chubby, outward-curving sides. The pies are then baked free-standing rather than in a mould.

For pork pies produced elsewhere in Britain and on a large scale, a mixture of minced, cured pork and fat is used, which gives the filling a pale pink colour. These are made – and then baked – in moulds rather than by hand, which results in an upright and uniform shape. Whether your preference is for the Melton Mowbray pie, or the standard variety, you will discover a delicious array of sizes from dinky and mini to large and extra-large.

Left: In Yorkshire, pork pies made with cured meat are sometimes served hot with mushy peas and mint sauce.

In various parts of Britain, pork pies have links to certain events, traditions and aspects of our culture. Don't forget, there are pork pie hats and, in cockney rhyming slang, "pork pies" means lies.

Although pork pies are usually consumed at room temperature, in Yorkshire they are sometimes served hot with mushy peas and mint sauce. Meanwhile, in their East Midlands homeland they were once a popular Christmas Day breakfast.

In addition to the different-sized pork pies, there are some variations on a theme with the gala or Grosvenor pies, which contain hard-boiled eggs and chicken encased in a loaf-shaped pork pie. Other alternatives are the small pork picnic pies with fruit toppings, such as aspic glazed cranberries, instead of the familiar pastry lids. However, for many of us, nothing surpasses the traditional pork pie, served with mustard, chutney or pickles. It is the perfect treat and taste for all seasons.

Having My Chips

In the January issue, Trevor Gehlcken stated how surprised he was to discover his flatmate had no vague idea how to cook (Food and Drink: Between Yum and Yuck).

Whereas Mr Gehlcken was skilled at cookery, I'm sorry to say I am similar to his friend. When I married, more than 60 years ago, my knowledge of kitchens was nil. I knew we had a kitchen, and I knew meals came out of them and were put on the dinner table. How they were prepared was not in my domain.

Things were to change. Dianne, my wife, had a baby at home. Her mother and my gran came to help but then Dianne made an error of judgement one day and for some reason, she thought I could cope with making chips with her instructions.

After an hour or so, she shouted: "Surely the chips are ready?" I said that they were very brown on the outside but when I broke them in half, they were still white. It was then explained to me that they aren't supposed to go brown all over. I was not popular.

The next day, Dianne decided no person could be that thick two days running. She decided we would have mash potato.

After an hour, she shouted down: "Is it ready?" I told her that I had boiled away two pans of water; the potato was getting softer but not yet in a state of mash. She informed me that they don't mash themselves.

The next day Dianne made the dinner, while I was left holding the baby. I'm not sure if she suddenly became fit and healthy or realised she could well starve to death or get food poisoning.

I have now broadened my knowledge of the kitchen. I am no longer a novice and not only can I make chips and mash potato, I can boil an egg and make tea and coffee.

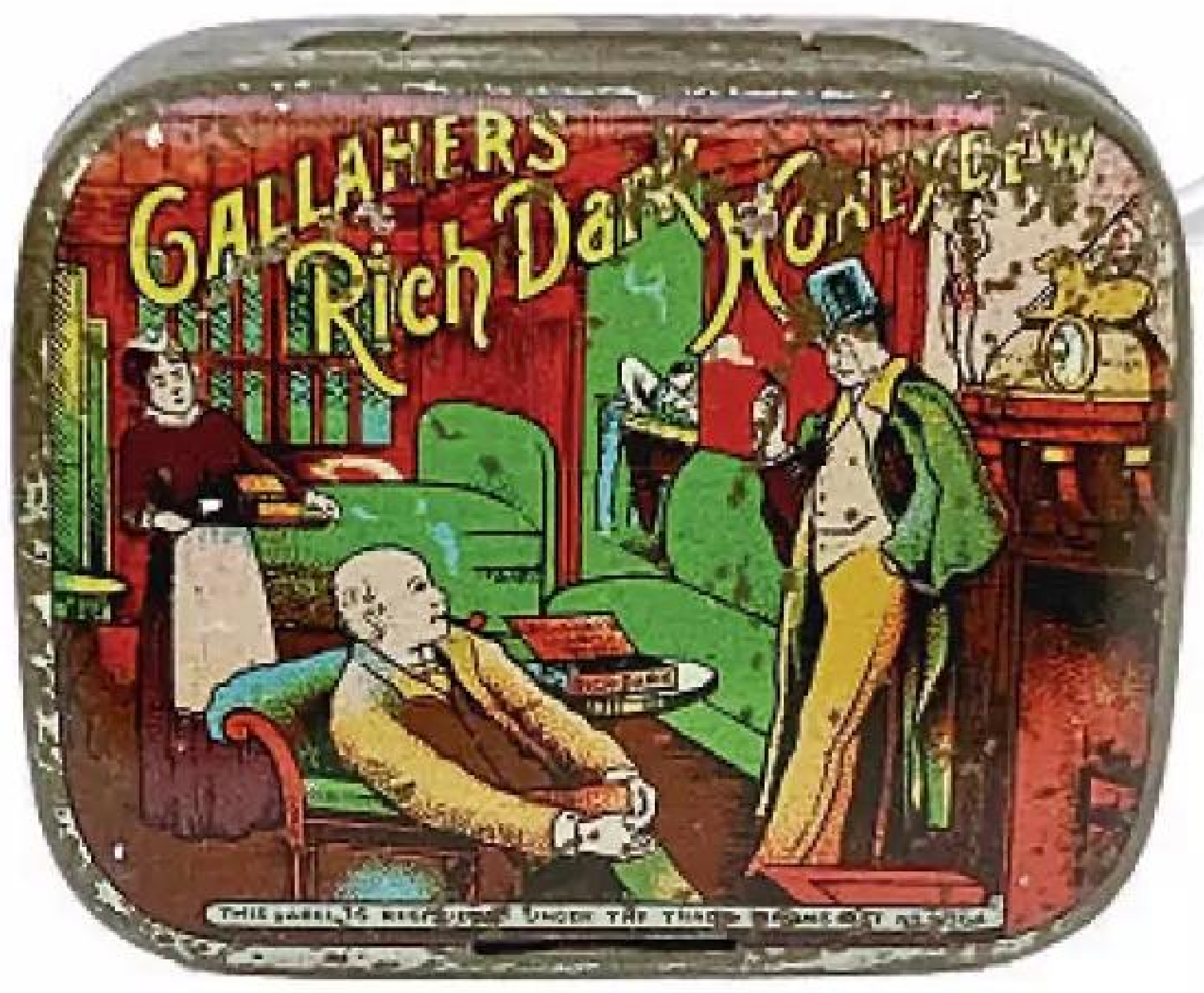
It just shows that you can teach an old dog new tricks.

David Sim, Normanby, Middlesbrough

If you know of a regional delicacy that has all but died out or would like to share your food and drink memories, then let us know via info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk or at the address given on page 4.

TREASURES In the ATTIC

Brian Howes unearths some nostalgic collectables that might be discarded as worthless junk but actually have a value to today's collectors. Can you estimate what each object might be worth and pick out which one is the big-money item? **The values are printed on page 88.**

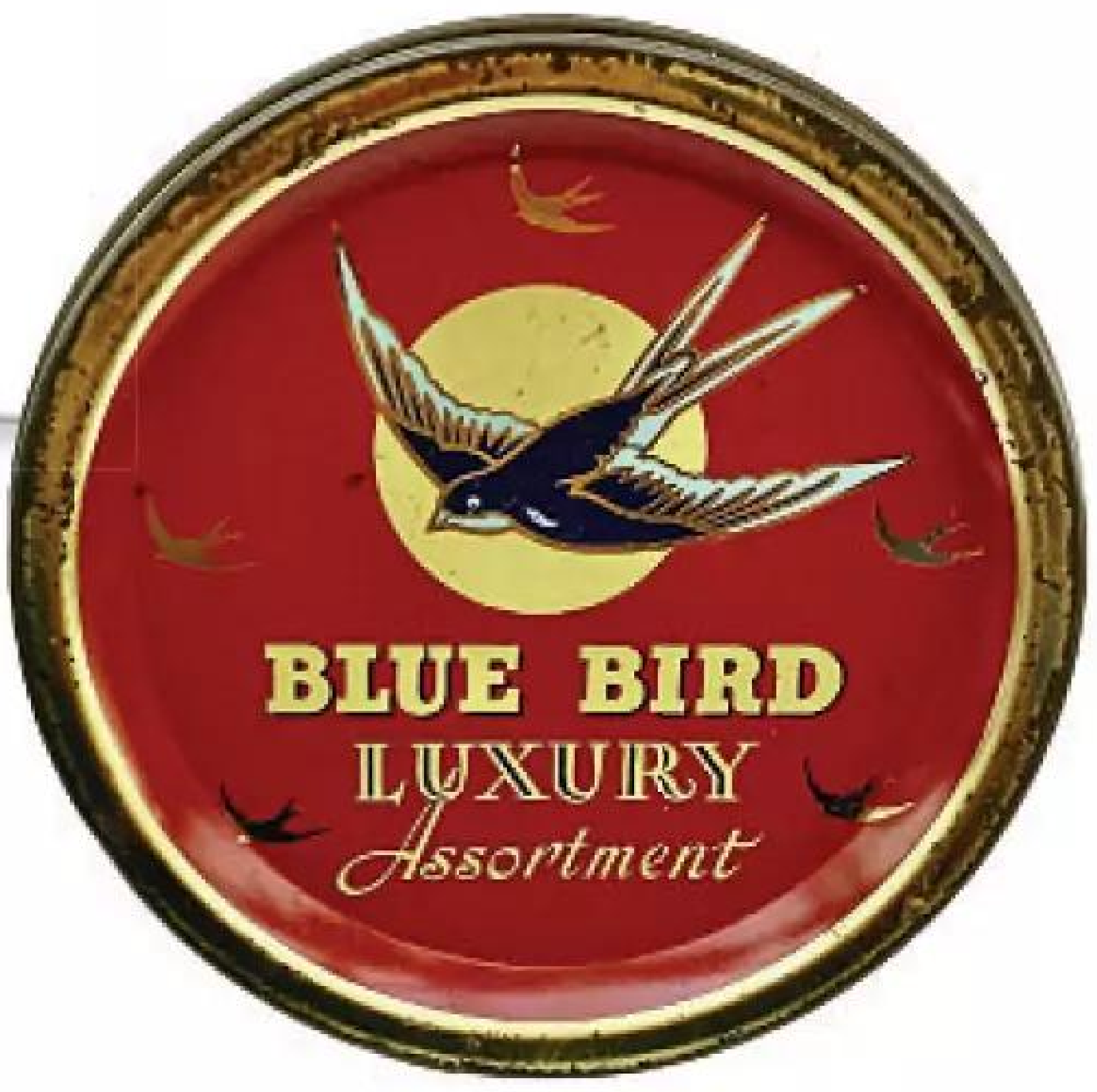


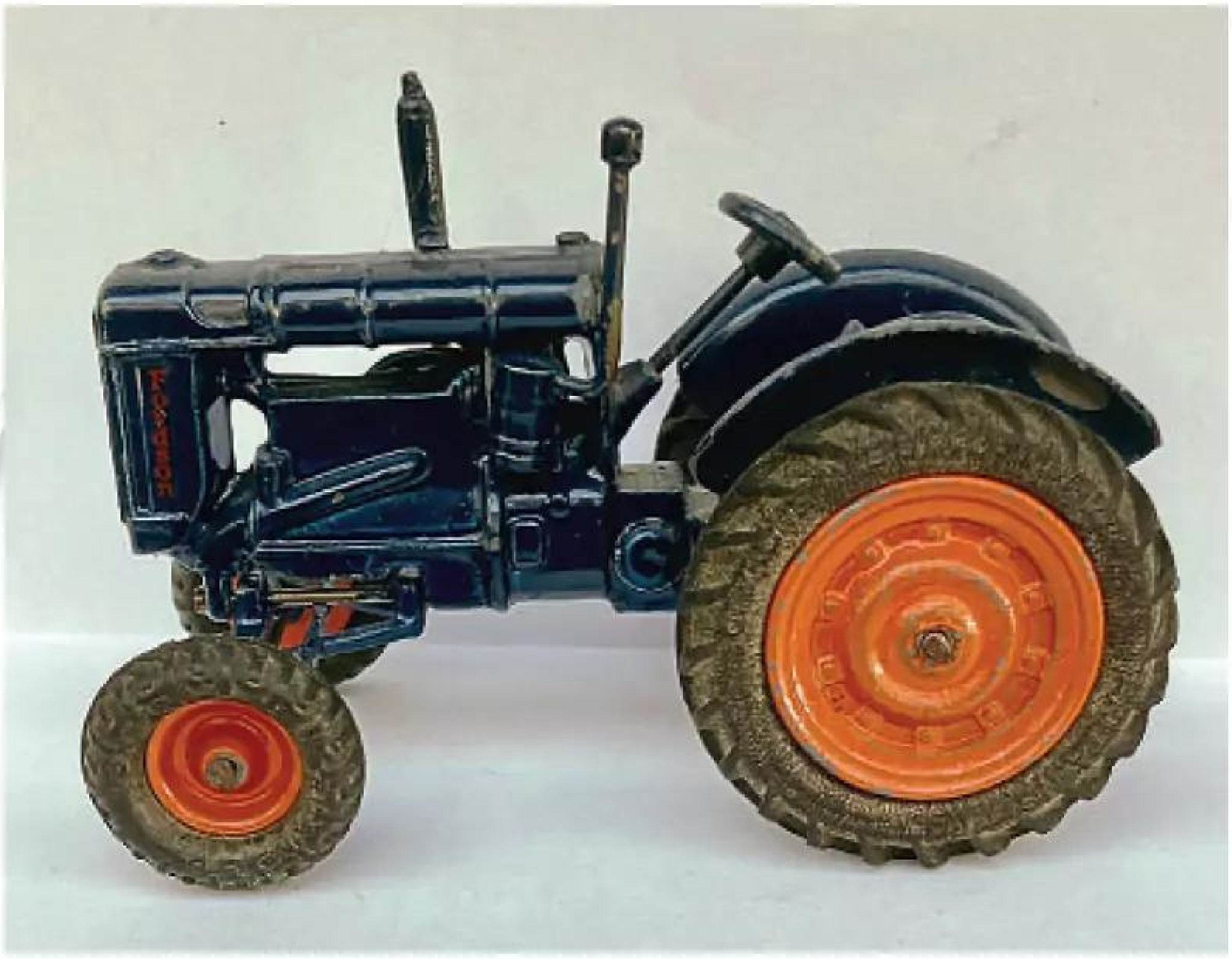
1 Smoking bliss

What a wonderful scene: two well-dressed Victorian gents enjoying a relaxing smoke of Honeydew flake tobacco in front of a roaring log fire. There's a game of billiards going on in the parlour and the maid has just entered the room with supper. This was the image used on these 1oz tobacco tins made by Gallaher of Belfast and London.

2 Bird of happiness

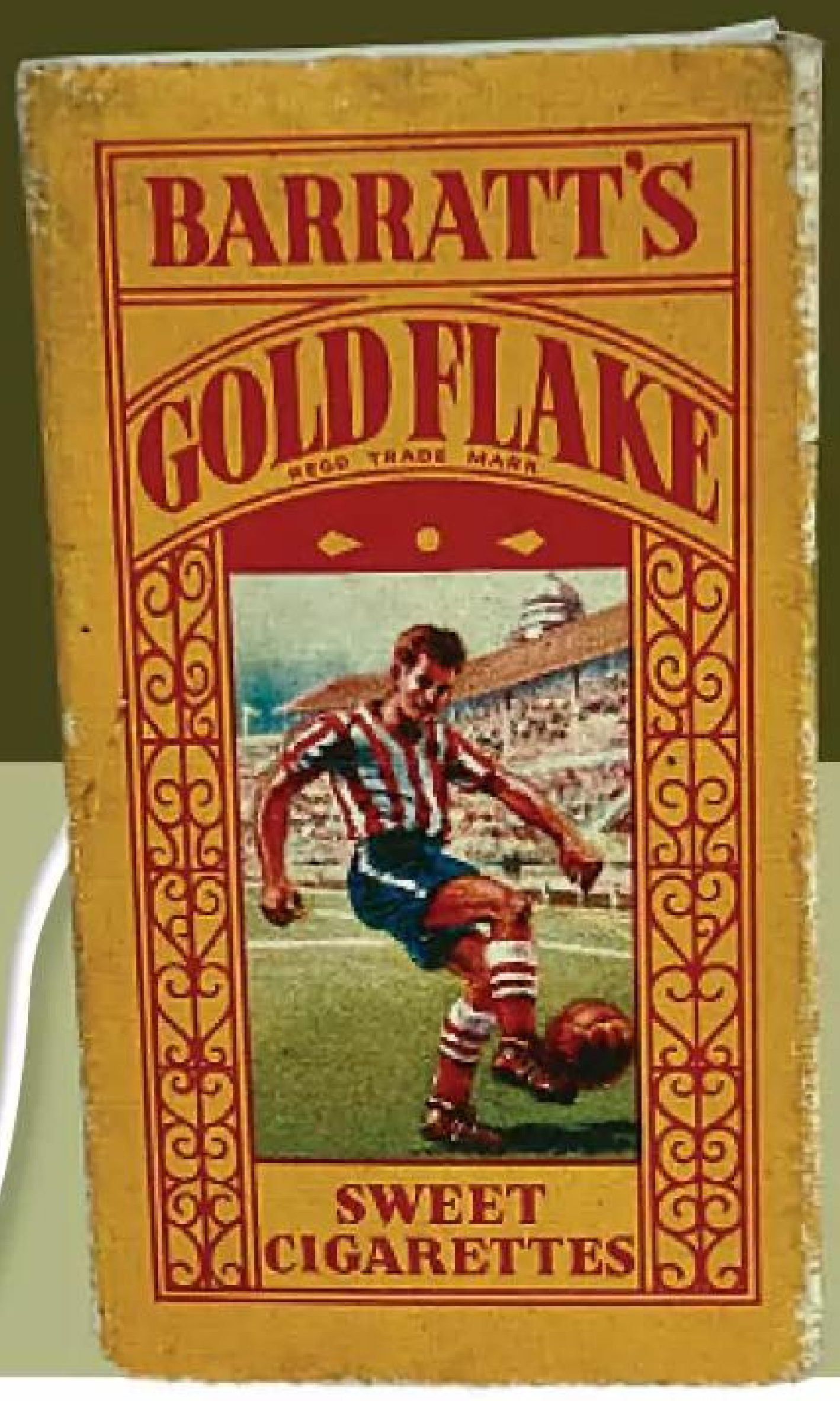
Remember the days when we all sat around the fire chewing toffees out of a big tin? Years ago, one of the most popular brands of toffee was Blue Bird made by Harry Vincent at his modern, purpose-built factory in Hunnington, near Halesowen in Worcestershire. His inspiration for naming the brand came from Maurice Maeterlinck's play The Blue Bird.





3 Farm favourite

This splendid Fordson Major E27N tractor was made by Britains at its London factory in the 1950s. It was the perfect toy to complement the wonderful hollow cast farm series animals and accessories made by Britains. The E27N was a popular farm tractor before being replaced by the Major E1A and Super Major in the 1960s.

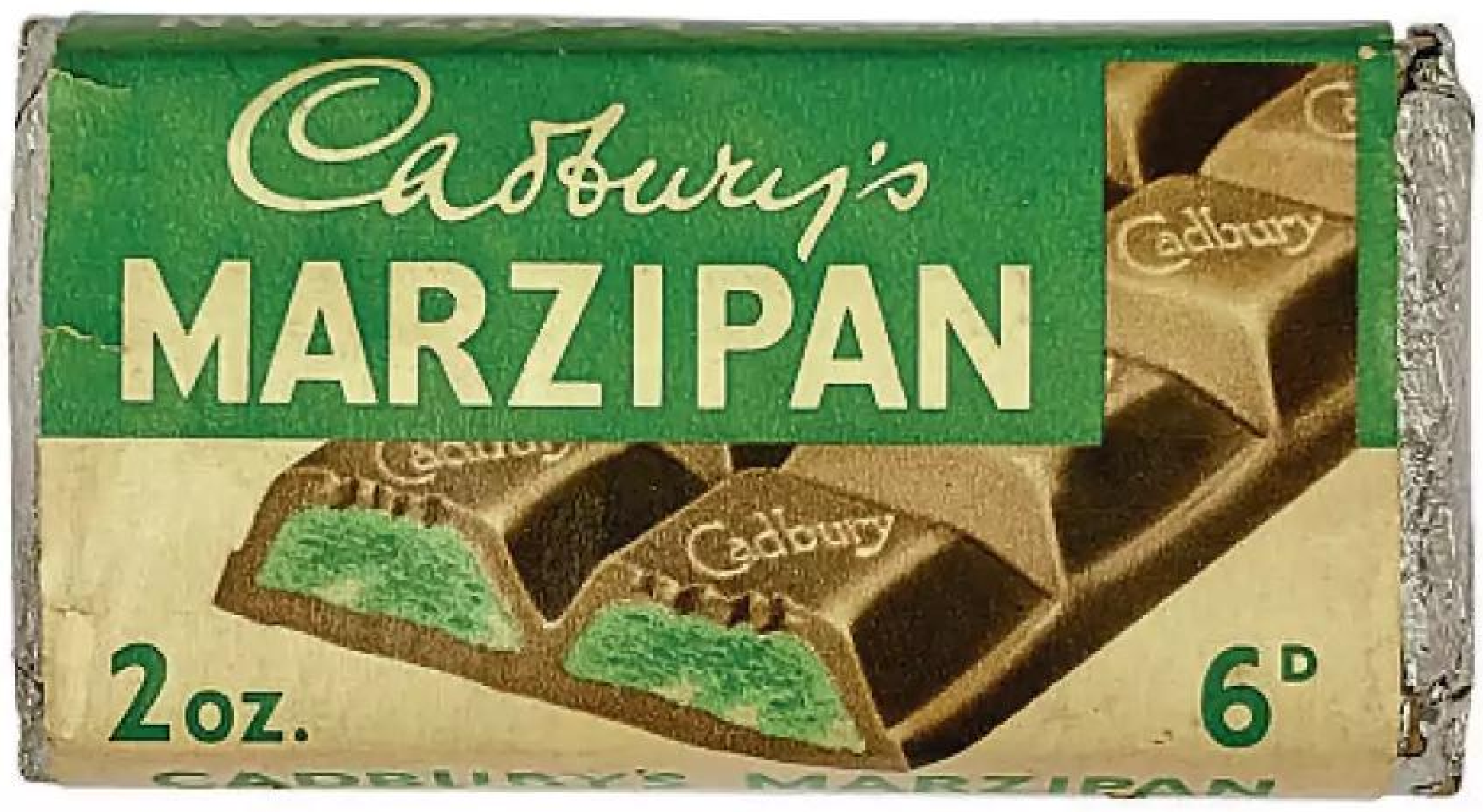


4 Card crazy

Barratt of Wood Green, north London made lots of our favourite sweets including DipDab, Refreshers, Sherbet Fountain, Fruit Salad, Black Jack, and Wham. They also produced these sweet cigarettes for children containing picture cards of famous footballers. Youngsters went crazy for cards in the 1960s – remember Brooke Bond tea cards?

5 A matter of taste

Marzipan is like Marmite – you either love it or hate it. I love it and I remember loving these delicious Cadbury's marzipan chocolate bars back in the 1950s and 60s. There were so many different bars around then, many of which were sold from vending machines. This is a genuine dummy bar used for shop window purposes.



WATNEYS
RED BARREL
WATNEYS

6 Red alert

Remember Red Barrel, the beer that divided the nation's beer lovers back in the 1960s? This is a mat for Watney's new beer which, pasteurised and made bright and lively by the injection of carbon dioxide into the barrels, didn't go down too well. Drinkers preferring traditional secondary fermentation in the barrel formed the Campaign for Real Ale.

SKEGNESS IS SO BRACING
SKEGNESS IS SO BRACING

7 Always bracing

This cute little crested china seaside souvenir dates to the 1930s when the Lincolnshire seaside town of Skegness was the most popular resort along the east coast. The jolly fisherman initially appeared on a railway poster for the Great Northern Railway. He was then adopted as a lasting mascot for the town.

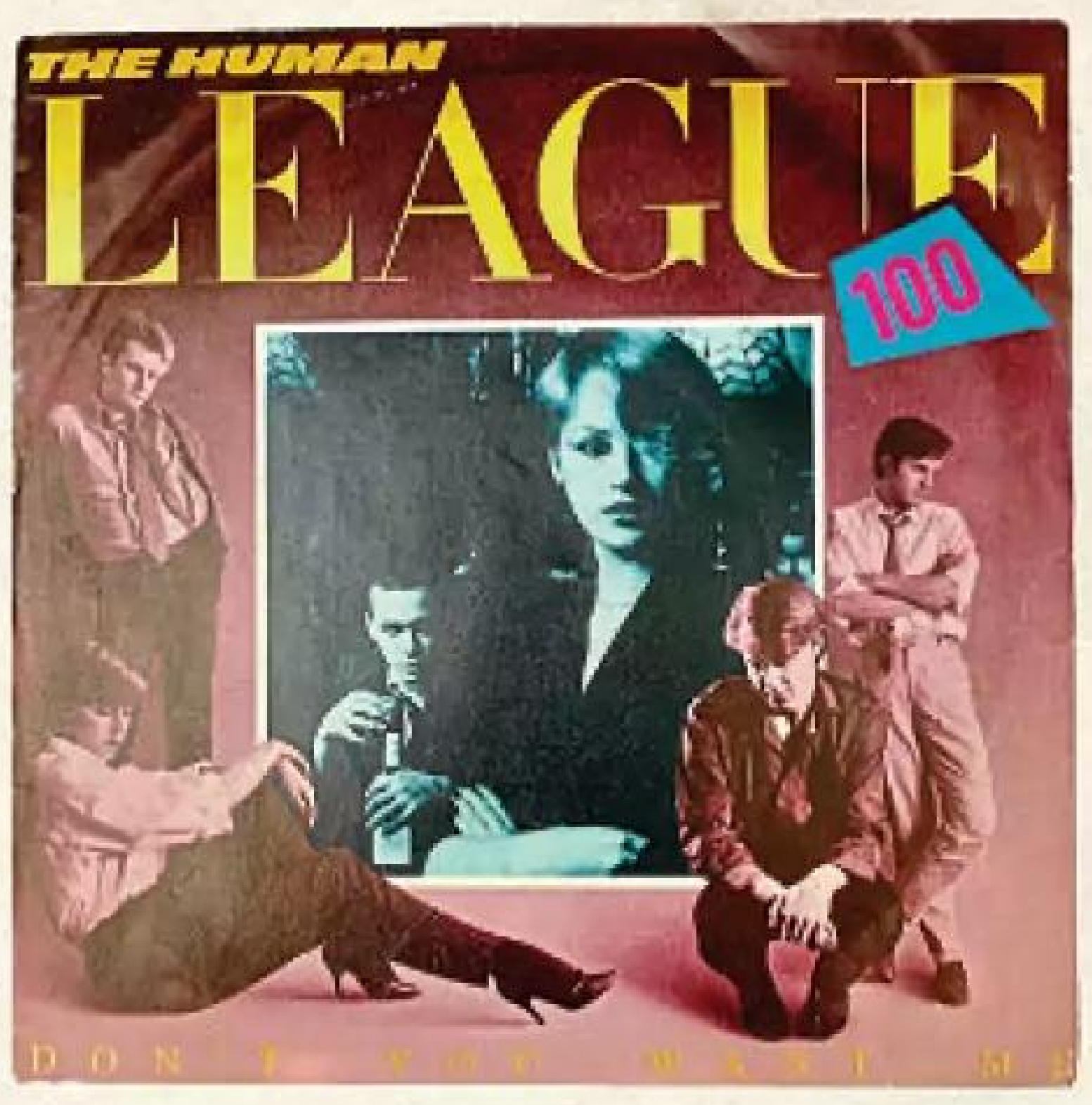
8 Spending a penny

This miniature tinplate cricket bat was made by Rowntree's of York in Edwardian times and originally contained a confection known as Cachous. They were sold by street vendors on the streets of London who also sold penny toys. Rowntree's made a large series of different novelty miniatures which are highly prized by collectors.

Rowntree's
CACHOUS

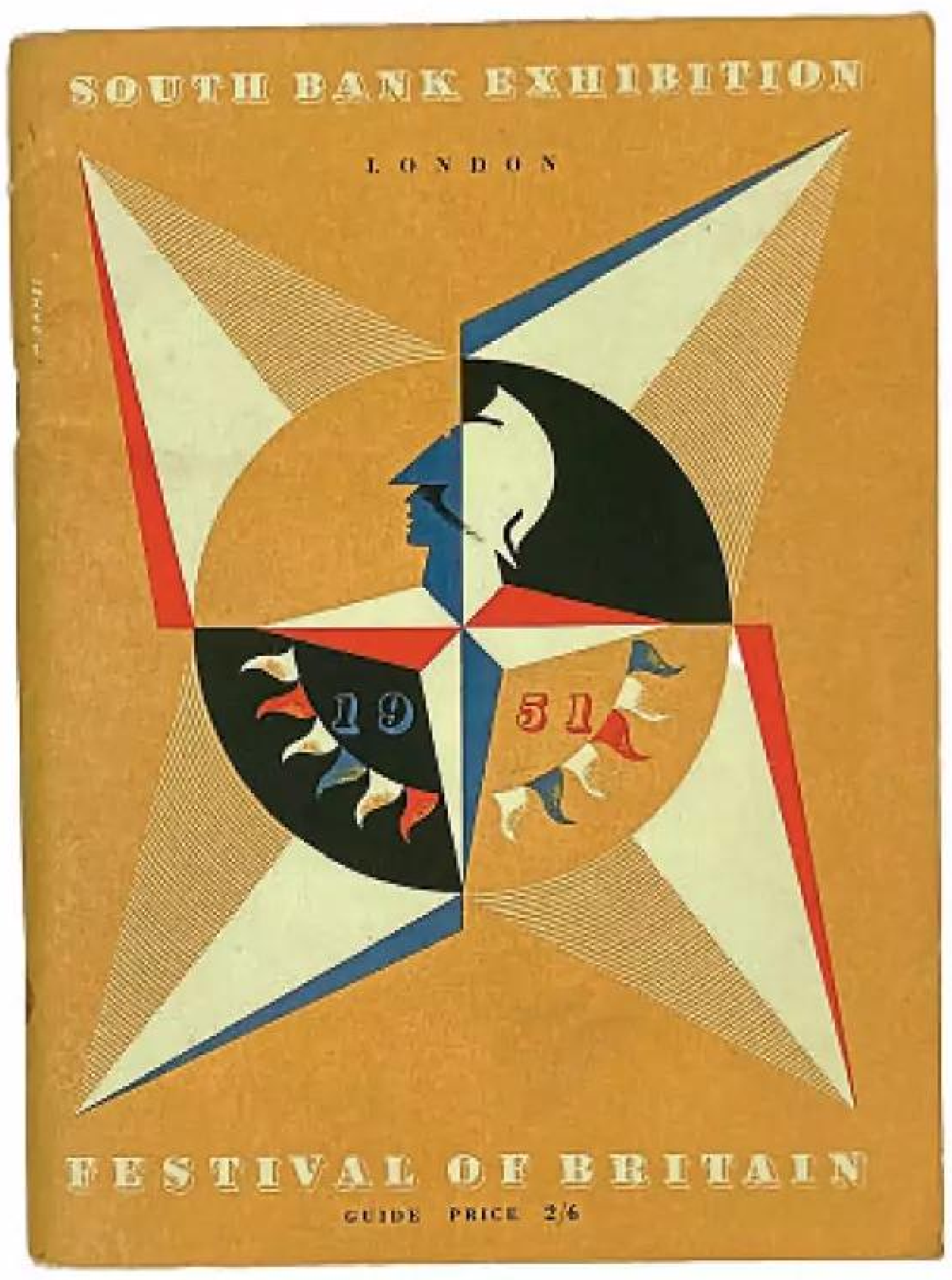
9 Great times

Mention of a waitress in a cocktail bar sends minds racing back to 1981 when this Human League classic topped the charts. Out clubbing, each time the dancefloor rocked to that magical chorus, the DJ simply turned the sound down and the whole room erupted into deafening screams of "Don't you want me, baby? Don't you want me? Oh!" – great times.



10 Festival time

Here is the original programme from the Festival of Britain's South Bank Exhibition held on the banks of the Thames in London in 1951. It celebrated Great Britain and everything that was great about the country in those postwar years.



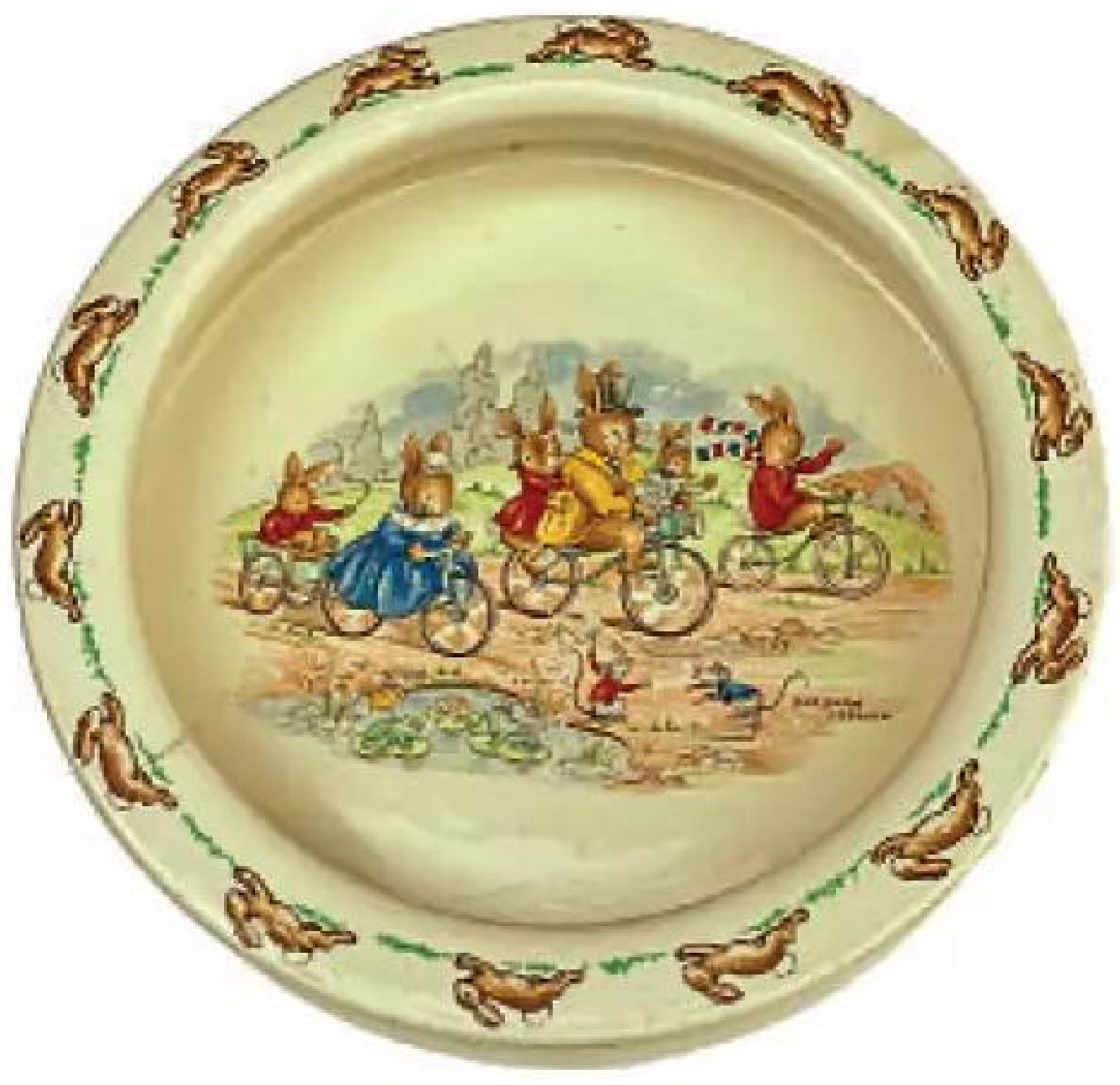
11 Bee brand

This stoneware bottle was excavated from an old rubbish tip in Oxfordshire many years ago. It once contained ginger beer made by WH Brakspear & Sons Ltd at its brewery in Henley-on-Thames. The bumble bee motif was adopted by Brakspear after its foundation in 1779. Many British brewers produced their own mineral waters.

THE BREWERY, HENLEY-ON-THAMES

12 Bunny bowl

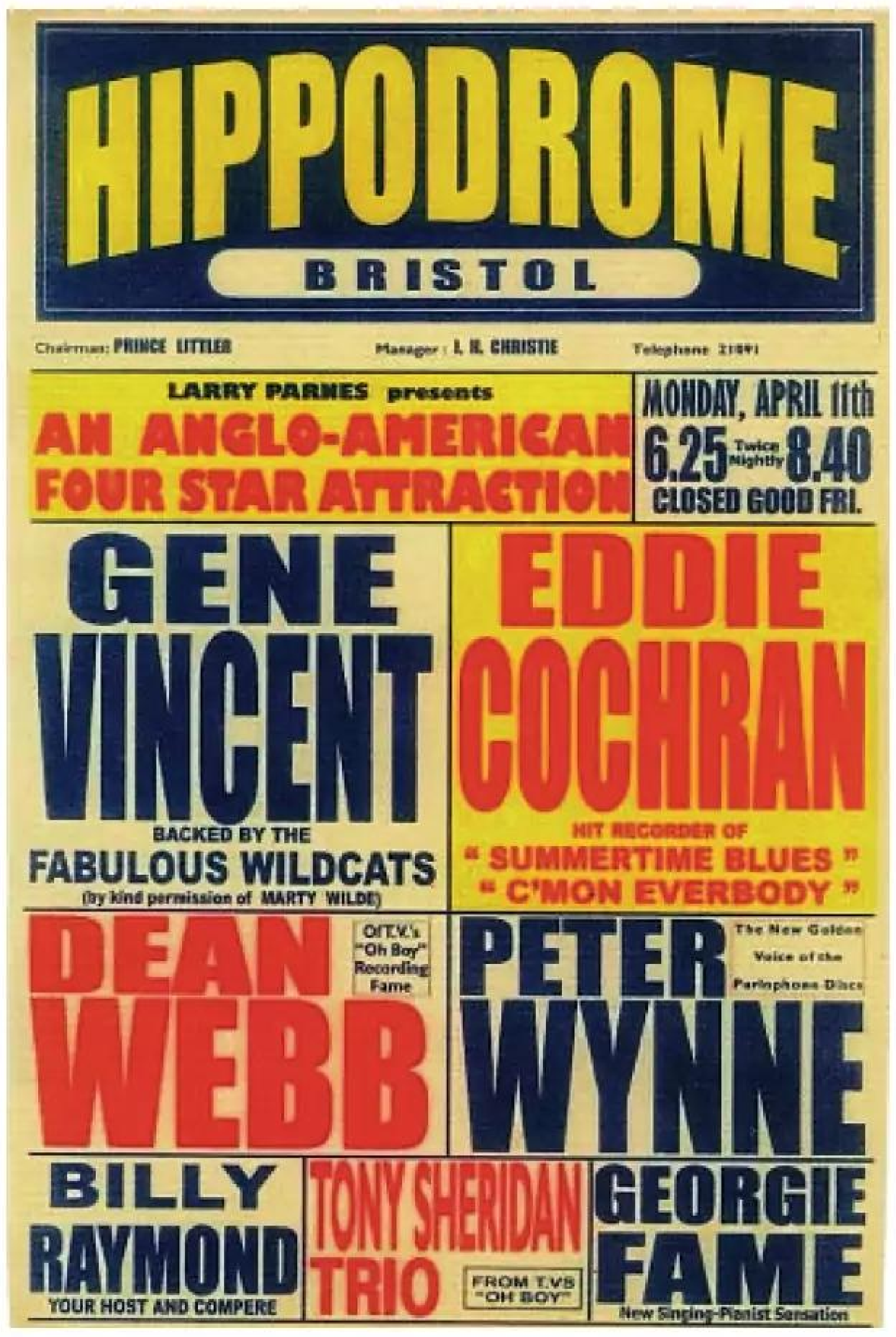
Made at the Doulton & Co factory at Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire, this Bunnykins tableware series baby bowl dates to the late 1950s. The Bunnykins line was launched in 1936, designed and illustrated by nun Barbara Bailey, second daughter of the Doulton & Co factory manufacturing director Cuthbert Bailey.



When Britain Rocked

Colin Mayo looks back on the Fast Moving Beat Show, the rock'n'roll tour which ended with the death of Eddie Cochran

Sixty-five years ago, on Saturday 16 April 1960, the Bristol Hippodrome hosted the last night of the Fast Moving Beat Show featuring American rockers Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran. Following a gruelling tour, the two were due to have a short break with Eddie returning to the US and Gene performing in Paris, after which they were scheduled to resume the tour which had proved a huge success. After the show, Gene, Eddie and Eddie's girlfriend, Sharon Sheeley, who had accompanied him on part of the tour, decided to take a taxi back to London. However, tragedy struck when the Ford Consul, driven by 19-year-old George Martin, crashed on Rowden Hill in Chippenham, Wiltshire. Gene and Sharon were seriously injured but Eddie died of his injuries the next day in St Martin's Hospital, Bath. His song Three Steps to Heaven became a posthumous UK No 1.



HIPPODROME
BRISTOL

Chairman: PRINCE LITTLER
Manager: I. H. CHRISTIE
Telephone 21891

LARRY PARNES presents
AN ANGLO-AMERICAN
FOUR STAR ATTRACTION

MONDAY, APRIL 11th
6.25 Twice Nightly 8.40
CLOSED GOOD FRI.

GENE VINCENT
BACKED BY THE
FABULOUS WILDCATS
(by kind permission of MARTY WILDE)

EDDIE COCHRAN
HIT RECORDER OF
"SUMMERTIME BLUES"
"C'MON EVERBODY"

DEAN WEBB
Of T.V.'s "Oh Boy" Recording Fame

PETER WYNNE
The New Golden Voice of the Parlophone Discs

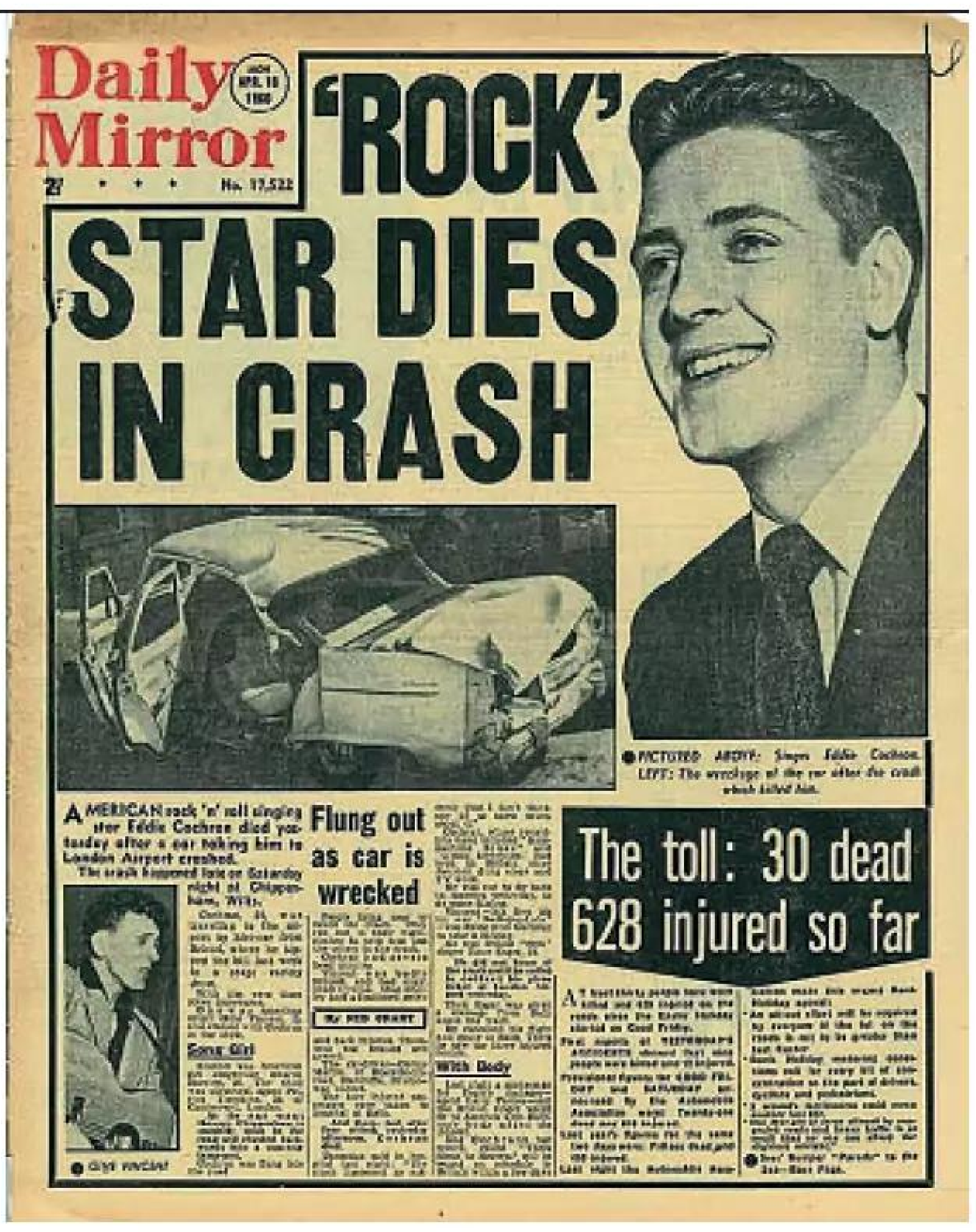
BILLY RAYMOND
YOUR HOST AND COMPERE

TONY SHERIDAN TRIO
FROM T.V.S "OH BOY"

GEORGIE FAME
New Singing-Pianist Sensation

Above: Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent together on the Fast Moving Beat Show tour of the UK during the first quarter of 1960. Left: The bill for the Bristol Hippodrome gig on Saturday 16 April 1960, with the US duo supported by singers from the "stable" of British impresario Larry Parnes.

The tour had been organised by Larry Parnes, a British impresario who had previously worked in theatre. Larry had seen the burgeoning teenage market as an opportunity to diversify into music and had teamed up with Lionel Bart, of Oliver! fame, to create a British teenage music sensation – Tommy Steele (Tommy Hicks) – who



Daily Mirror

No. 17,522

'ROCK' STAR DIES IN CRASH

PICTURED ABOVE: Singer Eddie Cochran. LEFT: The wreckage of the car after the crash which killed him.

AMERICAN rock 'n' roll singing star Eddie Cochran died yesterday after a car taking him to London Airport crashed.

The crash happened late on Saturday night at Chippenham, Wilts.

Flung out as car is wrecked

The toll: 30 dead 628 injured so far

Left: Carole Ward interviewed Eddie when he performed in Sheffield. She would become friends with Eddie's girlfriend, Sharon Sheeley. Above: How the Daily Mirror reported the death of Eddie Cochran. Below: Colin pictured beside the memorial to Eddie Cochran on Rowden Hill in Chippenham, Wiltshire.

Parnes had marketed as an all-round entertainer. Following the huge success of Steele, Parnes created a "stable of stars", foreshadowing what Brian Epstein would do in Liverpool upon discovering the Beatles. Young, good looking men were transformed from surly teenagers into idols with new names such as Billy Fury (originally Ronald Wycherley), Vince Eager (Roy Taylor), Johnny Gentle (John Askew), Georgie Fame (Clive Powell) and, of course, Marty Wilde (Reginald Smith) who performed regularly on Oh, Boy! and Boy Meets Girls. Indeed, Parnes was so successful at discovering new talent he was dubbed "Parnes, Shillings and Pence". However, many artists would later accuse him of exploitation due to the large cut he took of their earnings. Interestingly, he never attended any shows during Gene and Eddie's tour.

Larry realised a pure rock'n'roll show would appeal to teenagers and to give it a greater draw he would need US acts to headline. Buddy Holly and the Crickets had toured Britain in 1958 but the shows had been introduced by light entertainer Des O'Connor and they had appeared alongside variety acts so had not garnered much teenage credibility. In the US, Gene Vincent had failed to capitalise on his 1956 hit Be-Bop-A-Lula, which he thought was partly due to being unable to get airplay, so he frequently changed managers to try to re-establish himself. It was his latest manager, Norm Riley, who was approached by Parnes: would Gene tour the UK? Yes, of course he would.

Gene arrived in England on 5 December 1959 and the Fast Moving Beat Show began, supported by singers from the Parnes stable including Joe Brown, Vince Eager, Johnny Gentle, Dean Webb, Tony Sheridan, Peter Wynne, and Marty Wilde and the Wildcats. However, it was very intense with the musicians criss-crossing the country due to the difficulty in booking theatres in geographical sequence, so Norm was asked if he knew of any other performers who could take the strain.

> **"Gene's on-stage act caused a riot and two teenage boys fainted when they saw Eddie."**

His answer was 21-year-old Eddie Cochran, who had toured Australia with Gene Vincent. Eddie was a fresh-faced, multi-talented and versatile musician who wrote his own material. However, he was failing to cut through in the US despite having recorded songs which are now considered rock'n'roll classics – Summertime Blues, C'mon Everybody, and Somethin' Else. Eddie was duly added to the tour and performed for the first time in Britain at what is now the Ipswich Regent Theatre (then the Gaumont) on 24 January 1960.

The Fast Moving Beat Show was certainly fast. Moving around Britain by train, in a matter of weeks the acts had performed at Ipswich, Coventry, Worcester, Bradford, Southampton, Glasgow, Sheffield, London, Taunton, Leicester, Dundee, Stockton-on-Tees, Cardiff, Leeds, Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester and London again before the fateful trip to Bristol. In Dundee, Gene's on-stage act caused a riot and two teenage boys fainted when they saw Eddie. In another city, Gene had his trousers ripped off by female fans while in a taxi.

During the tour, the two got up to many rock'n'roll-style high jinks: in Glasgow, Eddie hid Gene's leg brace on top of a wardrobe while he was having a bath – a prank that backfired badly when Gene accused hotel staff of stealing from his room. They pulled the train's emergency cord (and got fined), mixed up shoes left out for polishing in a hotel in Taunton, and drank copious amounts of Jack Daniel's.

On-stage, Eddie and Gene delivered energetic and unforgettable performances which wowed their British audiences. That was particularly the case for Gene who had a somewhat erratic temperament, compounded by the

1960
EDDIE COCHRAN
CHERISHED MEMORIES

fact he was in constant pain due to a serious motorcycle accident he had had in Norfolk, Virginia. The accident had severely damaged his left leg and necessitated the use of a caliper. He would remove it during his show and swing it around his head, which resulted in fellow performer Joe Brown being knocked out.

On rest days, Eddie and Gene made television appearances on Boy Meets Girls and the influential BBC Radio programme Saturday Club, or recorded new songs – although judging the carnival queen pageant in Oldham was probably a bit more relaxing.

Eddie suffered acute homesickness during the tour and phoned his mother, Alice, every day (he nicked named her "Shrimper"). He was also haunted by the death, on 3 February 1959, of his good friend Buddy Holly who had died in a plane crash near Clear Lake, Iowa along with the Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens. Desperate to get back to London, on the night of 16 April, Eddie and Gene made the fateful decision to take a taxi straight after the show even though Eddie's Pan Am flight was not due to take off from London Airport (Heathrow) until Sunday lunchtime.

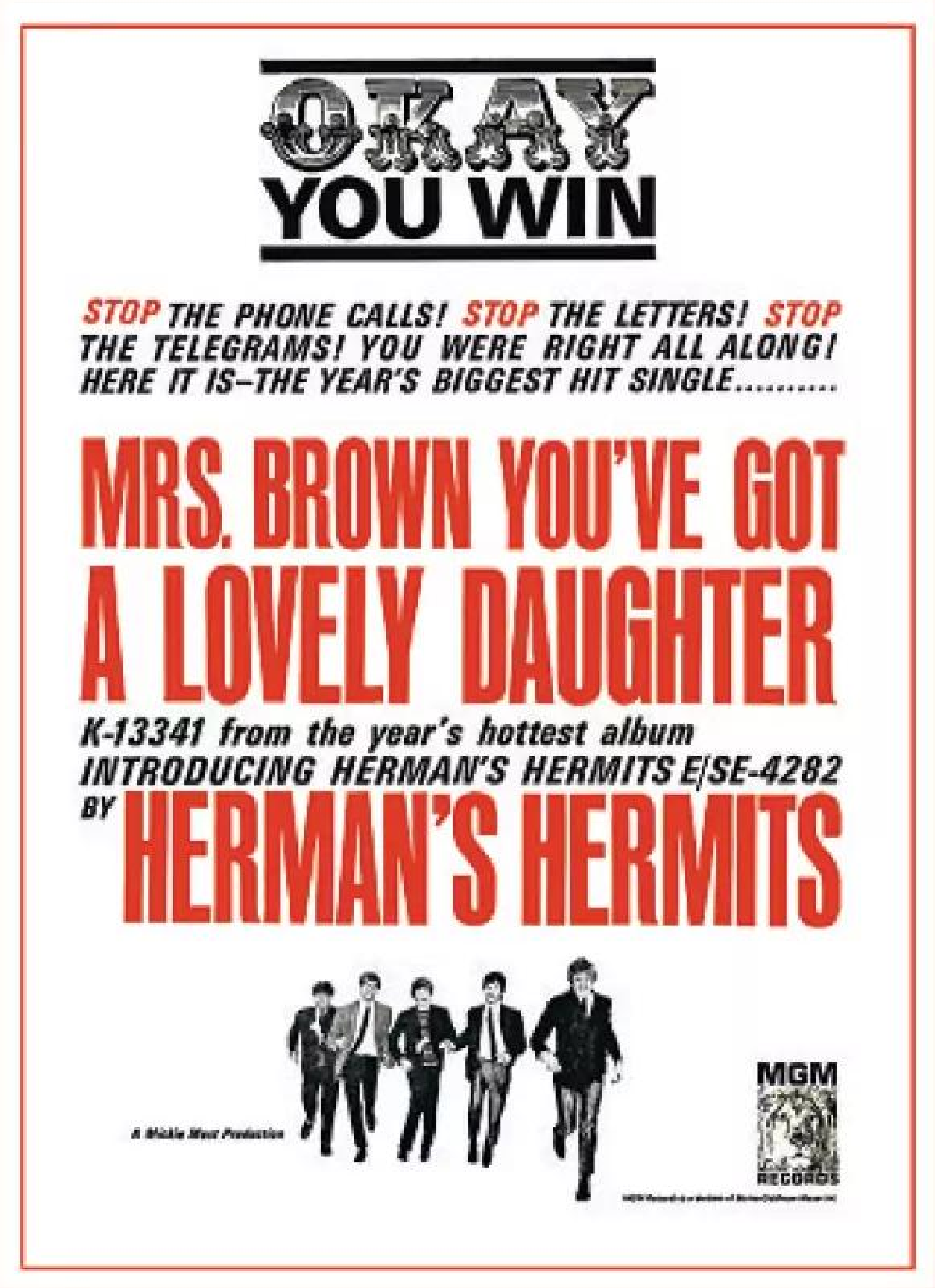
Carole Commander (nee Ward) interviewed Eddie when he performed in Sheffield. He asked her to head up his British fan club but Carole was already committed to Paul Anka's club. However, she remained friendly with Eddie's girlfriend, Sharon, and after the accident Sharon asked her to visit while she was recuperating in St Martin's Hospital; the two became firm friends. Sharon gave Carole a comb and handkerchief which had been in Eddie's leather jacket. Carole also became friendly with Eddie's mother, Alice, and his sister, Gloria, who invited her to her son's wedding. Carole says she has: "So many wonderful memories of a sensational rock'n'roll superstar who will never be forgotten."

Sixty-five years later, Eddie and Gene remain popular in Britian. In 2022, Dave Clark resurrected the Eddie Cochran Tribute Festival in Chippenham and relaunched it as the Chippenham Eddie and Gene Tribute Show. The event is growing in popularity, although sadly the fans are getting older. Still, there is a desire to bring Eddie and Gene's innovative music to a younger demographic for there is no doubt that without Larry Parnes, Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran, the history of rock'n'roll would have been very different. Very different indeed.

Into Something Good

Philip Williams and **David Williams** look back at the band Herman's Hermits which continues to perform live more than 60 years since their first hit

Many people who grew up in the 1960s still maintain a deep affection for the music that emerged during that remarkable decade. Consequently, it must have been gratifying when, in the late 1970s, several artists from the 60s began to perform reunion concerts, allowing audiences to experience their performances once more. Since the mid-1980s, a trend has emerged that shows no signs of slowing down: the enduring appeal of 60s nostalgia shows.



OKAY YOU WIN

STOP THE PHONE CALLS! STOP THE LETTERS! STOP THE TELEGRAMS! YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG! HERE IT IS–THE YEAR'S BIGGEST HIT SINGLE..........

MRS. BROWN YOU'VE GOT A LOVELY DAUGHTER

K-13341 from the year's hottest album INTRODUCING HERMAN'S HERMITS E/SE-4282

BY HERMAN'S HERMITS

A Mickie Most Production

MGM RECORDS

In the UK and Europe, where audiences can number in the thousands, these concerts conjure a delightful sense of nostalgia, whisking fans back to that unforgettable decade. Legendary bands and artists, now often beyond their prime, are not only performing for their loyal followers but also for a new generation that wants to hear those classic hits live. Inevitably, due to various reasons, the lineup of many bands has changed over the years, but for the audiences, the memories remain, ensuring the continued sold-out venues.

With 23 chart hits and more than 80 million records sold, Herman's Hermits are distinguished as one of the most accomplished musical acts from the UK. This Manchester band regularly delights fans on the nostalgia circuit, both in the UK and abroad. They first emerged in September 1964 with their debut single, I'm Into Something Good, which quickly reached No 1 in the UK. Their success soon carried them to the US, where they

Above: Herman's Hermits in 1967. From left: drummer Barry Whitwam, lead singer Peter Noone, Derek Leckenby (lead guitarist), Keith Hopwood (rhythm guitarist and backing vocals), and bassist Karl Green. Left: The band, along with songwriter Trevor Peacock, were astonished when their single Mrs Brown You've Got a Lovely Daughter hit the top of the Billboard Hot 100 in May 1965.

HERMAN'S HERMITS
INCLUDING THEIR HIT SINGLE "I'M INTO SOMETHING GOOD"
MGM
HIGH FIDELITY

Left: Herman's Hermits as they are today. Despite many lineup changes, drummer Barry Whitwam (centre) is still laying down the beat after more than 60 years. Right: Released in September 1964, debut single I'm Into Something Good quickly reached No 1 in the UK and achieved an impressive position of No 13 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart the following year.

were instrumental in the exciting British invasion of the 1960s. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the release of I'm Into Something Good in the US, where it achieved an impressive position of No 13 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Nevertheless, the band would go on to attain even greater success, seeing them quite rightly classed as the "best of British". In 1965, Herman's Hermits surpassed all other pop music artists globally in record sales, even beating legends such as Elvis and the Beatles. Billboard magazine also placed them as the top singles act in the US, beating the Beatles into second place. Throughout that year, the band released five singles, maintaining a presence on the charts for six months, with two of those singles reaching the coveted No 1 spot.

Towards the end of April, the band received a delightful surprise when their single Mrs Brown You've Got a Lovely Daughter made its debut on the Billboard Hot 100. By the start of May, they, along with Trevor Peacock, the writer of the song, were even more astonished to see it climb to the No 1 spot. They had initially recorded the song as a filler for their first album, released in 1964. With limited studio time remaining and in need of one final track, they thought: "Why not give it a go?" They were all familiar with the song, and the recording was completed in just one take. A US radio DJ picked up on the track and started playing it on his show, prompting the record label to launch it as a single. The rest, as they say, is history.

Mrs Brown You've Got a Lovely Daughter had been included in an ITV Television Playhouse production called The Lads two years earlier. It was performed by actor Tom Courtenay, who also released it as a single on Decca Records. Despite attracting considerable attention and airplay, the record did not achieve any significant chart success in the UK. In contrast, the version by Herman's Hermits achieved significant commercial success, selling millions of copies and providing both Peacock and the band with their first international success.

> **"You might be surprised to learn just how many memorable hits the band produced."**

Trevor Peacock is best remembered today for his role in the BBC sitcom The Vicar of Dibley. Trevor, who died aged 89 in March 2021, had a rich background as a songwriter, scriptwriter and Shakespearian stage actor long before he gained sitcom fame as the loveable, bumbling Jim Trott.

Later in 1965, Herman's Hermits achieved their second Billboard Hot 100 No 1 with their interpretation of the 1910 music hall song I'm Henry the VIII, I Am, which knocked the Rolling Stones's (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction off the top of the charts. By 1971, lead singer Peter Noone had left Herman's Hermits to pursue a solo career in acting and music in the US. He did, however, return to lead the band during a multi-artist American tour of "British invasion" acts in 1973-74. After this period, he resumed his solo career, while the remaining members continued to tour under the name Herman's Hermits.

Peter Noone was somewhat unhappy with the fact the band could continue to perform just based on the strength of their name and earlier successes. The late Derek Leckenby, who was the band's lead guitarist until his death aged 51 in 1994, recalled that since his school days, he had not experienced any other life than that of Herman's Hermits; thus, he believed it was a reasonable and rightful decision to carry on. Drummer Barry Whitwam stated: "When George Best left Manchester United, they were still Manchester United, so why not carry on?"

The band has seen many changes in its members over the years, but Barry is still laying down the beat after more than 60 years, at the age of 78. The current lineup has successfully captured the unique sound that is distinctly Herman's Hermits. Under Barry's direction, they have become one of the most hard-working bands in the business, performing at the increasingly popular nostalgia shows both internationally and in the UK. The Hermits themselves have acknowledged they were never the Beatles, Stones, or Kinks, and that was never their intention. They were quite content producing hit records that were joyful, upbeat, and infectious, which had the world singing along.

Some people might be surprised to learn just how many memorable hits the band produced, with most being excellent songs that rightly deserve their place in pop music history. These tracks feature catchy melodies that made everyone happy and are still easily recognisable today. Songs like Silhouettes, A Must to Avoid, Can't You Hear My Heartbeat, and There's a Kind of Hush, the latter a hit nine years before the Carpenters released their version. There are many others, including the classic No Milk Today and not forgetting the song that first introduced the band to audiences, I'm Into Something Good – a sentiment we can all relate to when listening to the music of Herman's Hermits today.

Yesterday Remembered

We welcome your memories of around 800 words and pay £20 for each story published. Don't forget to include pictures with your submission.

Who's Wearing My Socks?

Nena Jover Kelty of Glendale, California, US remembers:

Congratulations
Nena Jover Kelty

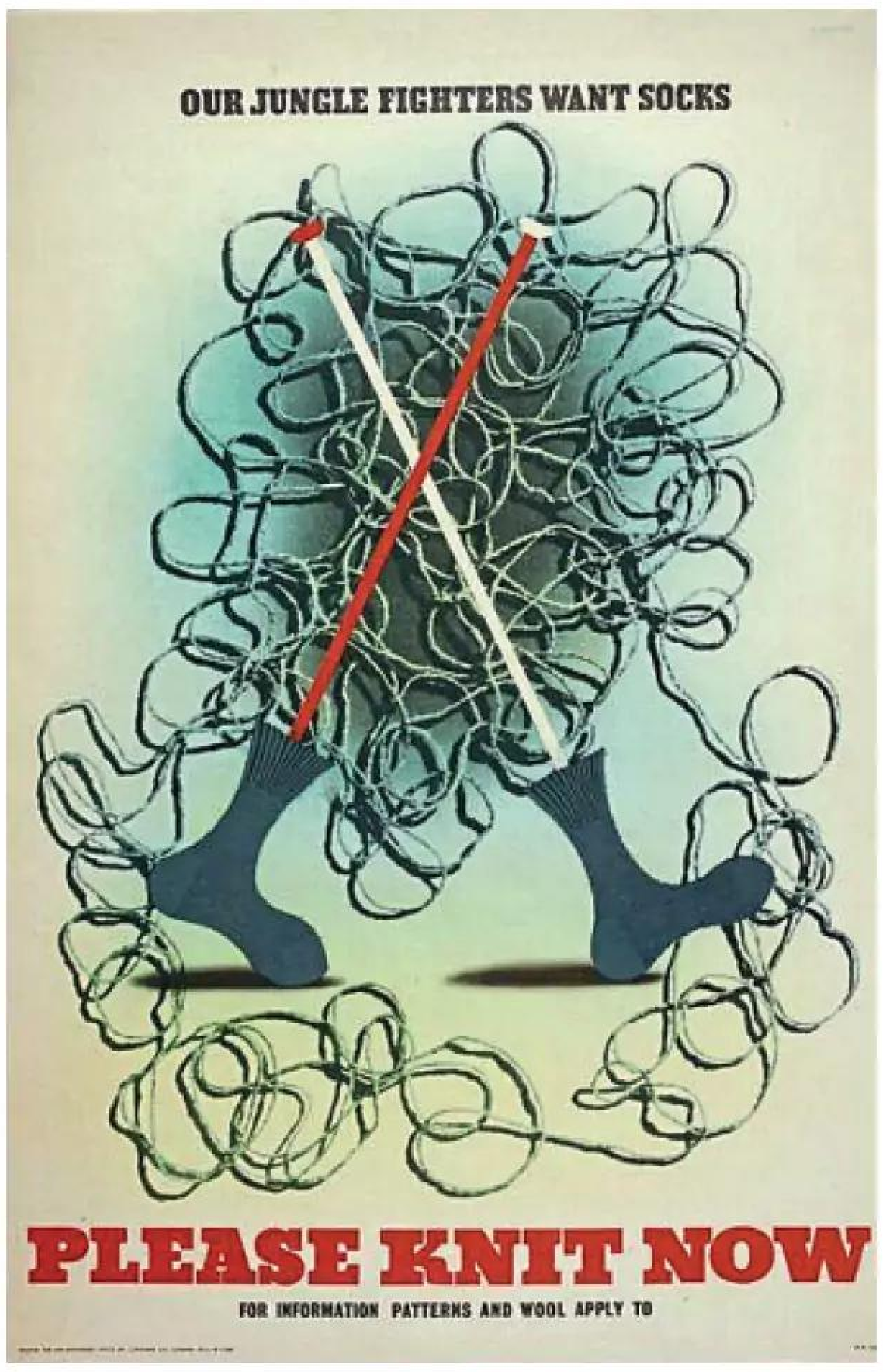
One day late in 1939, a small article appeared in our daily newspaper. It was submitted by the government and was an appeal for British women to knit socks for men in the army, which was unable to obtain good-quality, long-lasting socks for our lads. The advert urged women to send off for the khaki-coloured yarn that was free to anyone who would knit a pair of socks for a British soldier. Good-quality material was unavailable on the regular market.

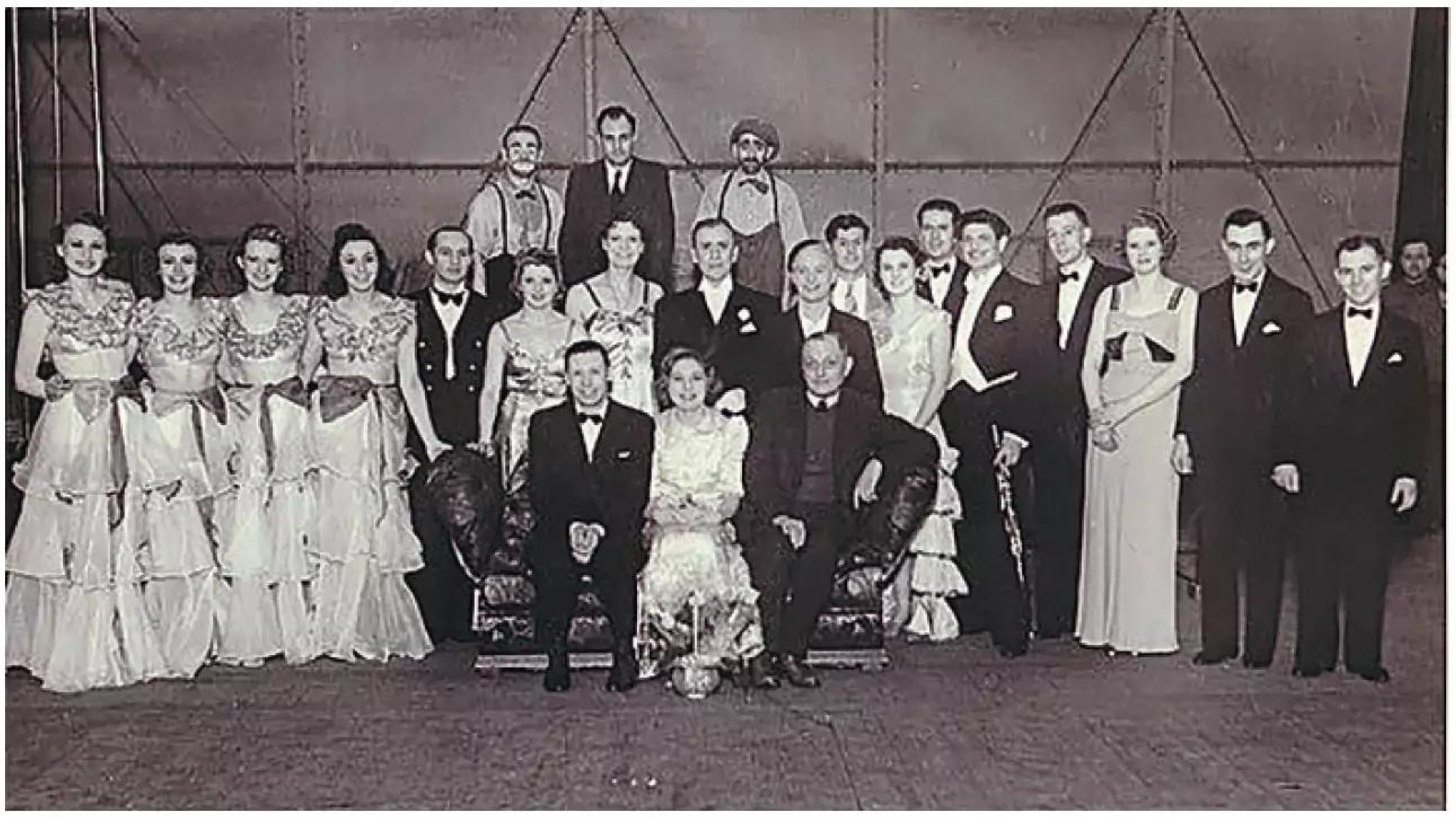
I wanted to help, so sent off for the free yarn. I liked to knit but was chagrined to learn that, to make a pair of socks with no seams to irritate the wearer, I had to use four needles, something I had never done. I struggled to keep the stitches on their needles but kept at it until I had more or less mastered it. When I had finished them, the socks looked OK but perhaps a bit small. I consoled myself with the thought that not all men have big feet. I posted my socks off to the army.

That was the end of my sock adventure, I thought. However, in March 1940, Ensa booked us to go with George Formby to France to entertain the troops. It was at British headquarters and very close to the Belgium border. I had to be sworn in to the British Expeditionary Force and have a chaperone, even though I was with my dad and brother Raf. We worked in a regular theatre and the show was just like a regular variety show in England. The only difference? The audience was all soldiers.

During the last act on the bill, two men used a trampoline. After the act finished, George came back on the stage and asked the audience if anyone would like to come up and try the trampoline. There were always about four or five who dashed up and were very eager. There was always a huge laugh when he asked them to take off their shoes before getting on the trampoline. This was the biggest laugh of the evening. All of them had huge holes in their socks. They quickly rid themselves of this embarrassment and joined in the fun.

So, enter the socks. George took those brave soldiers backstage where he had barrels of all those handmade socks from the women in the UK for them to choose from.


OUR JUNGLE FIGHTERS WANT SOCKS
PLEASE KNIT NOW
FOR INFORMATION PATTERNS AND WOOL APPLY TO



Left: Nena responded to an advert urging women to send off for khaki-coloured yarn that was free to anyone who would knit a pair of socks for a British soldier. Above: The Ensa group Nena was with in March 1940 in France. Front row centre (seated) are George and Beryl Formby and the French theatre manager. Standing behind him is Nena's father wearing a beret and to his right are Nena and her brother Raf. Third from the far right is Nena's chaperone, Dorothy.

Attractions of Australia

Clif Hardy of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia remembers:

At a recent barbecue, during the friendly chatter, my wife and I were asked why we had migrated from England to Melbourne. I guess it is a legitimate question for Australians to be asking – after all, the UK is often their first destination for holidays or for looking up resident relatives of their parents.

> **“Fremantle with nothing but soot-stained buildings and not one kangaroo in sight was an added disappointment.”**

In our case, the reason we jumped at the offer made by the Australian migrant authority way back in 1967 was because of the attractions they promoted. They held a film show with refreshments in our local town hall for those who may have been considering migration at a coverall fee of £10 a head for adults and free for children. I gave the offer a great deal of thought after my wife had attended the show.

Having visited Western Australia in my service in the British Merchant Navy, I had not formed a great impression of at least a small portion of the western continent. I had been on a couple of winter trips when the heavy rains had come down sideways in gale force winds. A trip or two into the comparatively new Western Australia city of Fremantle which, like the cities of old England, had nothing but soot-stained buildings and not one kangaroo in sight was an added disappointment.

My wife was keen to progress with an application after we had had one of the worst English winters ever and were not looking forward to another. Yes, England always had jolly white Christmases where we had witnessed Australian travellers rolling around in the snow and laughing their heads off. But we had suffered ice where ice had no place being.

Go to bed at night leaving our coal fire on the ground floor burning brightly in the grate, awake in the morning to find our bedroom windows frozen shut, on the inside, with the net curtains trapped in the ice which had been caused by our breath and condensing on the glass windowpanes.

Where do most people go soon after getting out of bed? But the water in the toilet tank and bowl was frozen. Boil a kettle and pour its warm water into the toilet, then flush. Wash your hands, but the cold-water tap is frozen. Defrosting by more boiling water requires the bathroom window to be opened despite its being frozen shut. Once opened, the boiling water is emptied over the inlet pipe running up the ground- and second-floor brick walls.

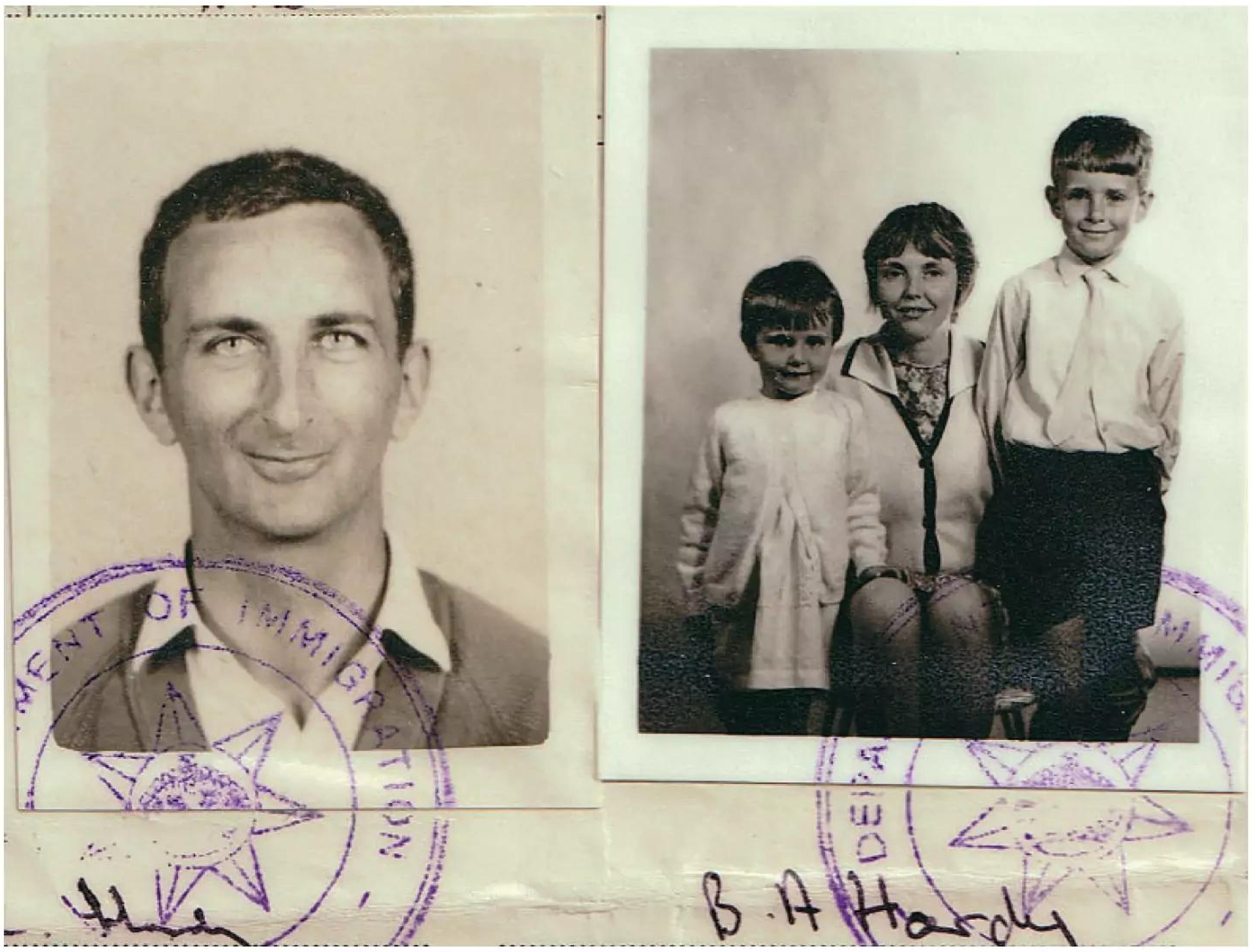
So far, not too much trouble except to allow used water to flow from the house into the sewer and drains. This involved digging up the soil surrounding the pipes and starting a fire in the trenches. I often had to get up earlier to carry out these extra duties, even if it meant extra chores and missing breakfast to avoid being late for work.

One episode like that was a novelty but two or three were not. The children were still in nappies which, along with other clothing, were hung out on the back garden washing line to dry so, of course, it froze before it dried. No wonder my wife was interested in the main attractions to Australia: “Three hundred and sixty washing days a year.”

Pictures of schoolchildren in sun bonnets and cotton school uniforms. A choice of air or passenger liners to complete the journey. How could we resist? We had not been able to have a holiday since we had married eight years previously, so a long trip on a liner was like a strong magnet.

We have now been resident naturalised Aussies for nearly 60 years, our children having long since left home and moved miles away. We have travelled extensively “at home”, mainly by car, and distance isn’t the concern that it was in the UK.

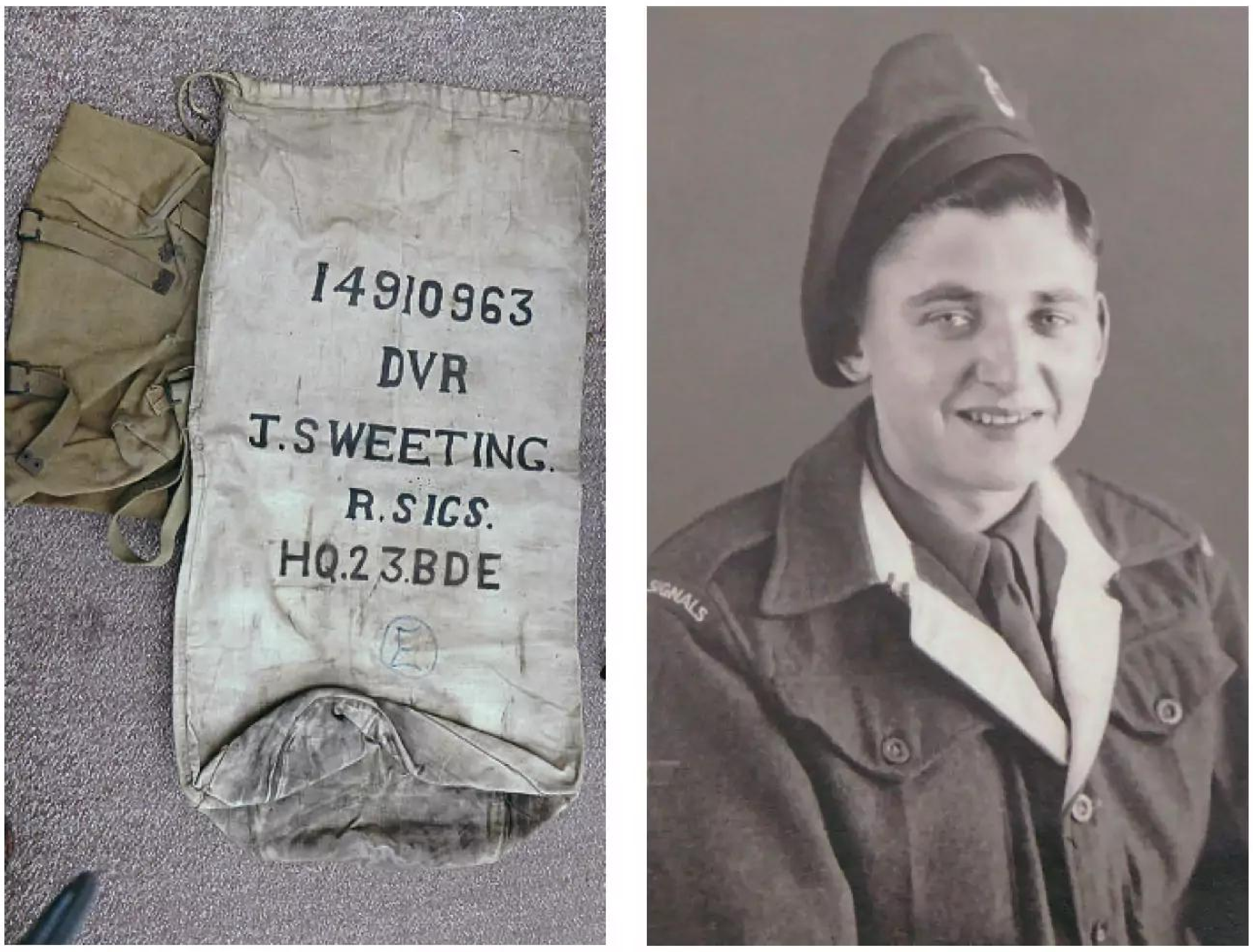
Did we have any regrets? Yes, as far as relations left in the UK were concerned but I feel we have all had far greater opportunities in accommodation, education and employment than I experienced as a child in the London area.



Above: Department of Immigration stamps on the passports of Clif and his wife when they moved to Australia nearly 60 years ago.

Monkey Business

John Sweeting of Barkingside, Ilford, Essex remembers:



Left: John's memories of his time stationed in India were rekindled when he discovered his old kit bag and rucksack while sorting through a chest of drawers in his garage. Right: Private John Sweeting received his call-up papers on his 18th birthday.

In among my 18th birthday cards in December 1944 were my call-up papers. It wasn't a surprise, although I never thought when war broke out in September 1939, and I was only 12, that I would be called upon to do my bit for king and country in the conflict.

Schooling after war had been declared was a bit chaotic for me, shunting between my parents in the London suburbs and as an evacuee with my grandparents in Gloucestershire. I left school completely when I was 14 and went to work for a local engineering firm doing war work in the tunnels that had been constructed for the London Underground but were not yet in use. Certainly, a very strange working environment.

However, joining the forces opened a whole new world for me. My father's parting shot as I left was to stay away from the women, advice which I very soon forgot. A large part of my training was at Catterick, near Richmond in North Yorkshire, where I qualified as an army driver, learning to drive in both a 15 hundredweight and three-tonne army truck.

For recreation, we used to go to Richmond where the rollerskating rink was a favourite to meet the girls. One of the antics we got up to was to form a long line and go round in a circle with the end of the line thus going exceedingly fast. Embarrassingly, one morning I was called to the camp gatehouse as there was a woman there asking for me as I had her daughter's ration books in my tunic pocket. Needless to say, I got a lot of stick over that.

I was lucky as by the time I had completed my training, the war was over but trouble was brewing in India, so I was duly dispatched in October 1945 to help keep order there. My "help" amounted to being the commanding officer's driver. Surprisingly, he had his wife and her sister with him in India and I frequently acted as their chauffeur. The sister was my age and it caused some comment when she chose to dance with me, a mere squaddie, at a regimental function rather than with one of the officers.

During my time in India, I was stationed initially in Calcutta. We had docked in Bombay and then transferred by rail with our vehicles on flatbed wagons. We slept within the vehicles. The trains were like nothing I had seen before – describing them as overcrowded was an understatement. Indeed, many aspects of life in India were quite an eye-opener.

Later, we were moved to Delhi where we were billeted within the famous Red Fort. Even though I was a designated driver, I still had to do sentry duties and face goading from the locals. My time in India coincided with independence being granted in August 1947, the country being partitioned to become India and Pakistan, and the unrest that followed.

One of my driver tasks was to run the gauntlet of a rather hostile local population and collect young women who were working at the bases. The vehicles were Dodge WD-15 flatback trucks with a canvas cover and often there were up to 10 passengers. There were no doors but the spare wheel was mounted next to the driver to give some protection.

Roads were poor and steeply cambered for floodwater to run off. Only the centre of the road was sealed with tarmac and the sides were just beaten soil which turned to mud after the rains. One day, as I approached a bridge, I lost control of my vehicle as it skidded on the mud and it slithered through the bridge parapet into the river and overturned on its side. Fortunately, the only casualty – apart from my pride – was the major's hat which floated off down the river.

There were lots of monkeys about, even in the heart of Delhi. Somehow or another, I ended up with a young one as a pet. However, as it got older, it didn't seem to appreciate my tender loving care and became aggressive, so – after it bit me – it was time for it to go.

Eventually, it was time for me to go back to England after being away for 24 months. It involved a long sea return journey through the Suez Canal and at times the heat was oppressive, so we used to sleep on deck.

I was reminded of these events recently when sorting through a long-forgotten chest of drawers in my garage. To my surprise I discovered my old kit bag and rucksack but I am not planning to use them again.

In the Club Books

Sharon Haston of Falkirk, Stirlingshire remembers:

Before internet shopping, we had an early clerical version called club books. Many will probably know them as catalogues, but in my central Scotland village we called them club books. The ones I remember are Gratton, Littlewoods, Freemans, and Kays. Each produced a spring/summer and autumn/winter version.

They were so thick and enormous that Jaime Sommers, the Bionic Woman, would have struggled to rip them in half. You could buy anything in them including clothes, furniture, tools, jewellery and kitchen equipment just as you can on today's shopping websites. Instead of clicking with a mouse to see what was available to buy, I'd often lie down on a rug in front of our electric fire and flick through.

As a child in the 1970s, I loved the hundreds of pages devoted to toys in the winter catalogue. What could I ask Santa to bring me? Did I want Sindy or Barbie? KerPlunk or Spirograph? A space hopper or a pogo stick? The summer edition wasn't so great for children. Hardly any toys. Instead, there were pages of lawnmowers and garden equipment at the back. Yawn.

My mum always had a club book in the house but she was never an agent. Agents took orders from family and friends and received commission. Everyone knew someone who was a club book agent. It was useful because in the days before credit was easily available, you could pay off your purchases at unbelievably small amounts per week. It took ages to pay them off, of course, but it helped parents to pay for Christmas and school clothes among other things. My husband, Robert, remembers, as a teenager, buying some golf clubs from his sister's catalogue so he could play pitch-and-putt in the local park. He paid them up at something like 50p per week for 32 weeks.

In the winter catalogue there were a few pages devoted to photos of Christmas hampers. Beside each hamper, all the products it contained were set out beside it. Some of them had so much stuff that the photo took up half a page. There would be a few bottles of alcohol (more likely to be sherry or port than wine then), and loads of tins of cold meat, fruit and salmon plus biscuits, chocolates and a Christmas pudding.

Left: Sharon on the right, in the flowery skirt, with a childhood friend. Taken when she was aged about seven, Sharon would scour the club books to see the toys. Right: Sharon and her husband, Robert, at Lytham St Annes in Lancashire. Robert bought golf clubs from the club book and Sharon probably bought her rara dress from it.

In the pages selling clothes, the models always looked impeccably glamourous, smiling and laughing with one another and having a great time. It was perfect advert land and looked like a world you'd want to live in. Sometimes famous people modelled in them, including Lulu.

When I was aged about eight or nine, our mums used to give my friends and me their old club books to play with. We'd cut out photos we particularly liked and stick them into a scrapbook. Such simple pleasures. Especially because, if it was raining, we were allowed to play in my friend's caravan which was parked in their drive. I felt like I was Anne in the Famous Five book Five Go Off in a Caravan and looked around in wonder at the tiny sink and cooker top, wishing I could go for an adventure in it.

Today we have a variety of parcel delivery companies, but back then it mostly seemed to be either Royal Mail or White Arrow that brought stuff from the club books.

As a teenager in the 1980s, I ordered clothes such as rara skirts, linen jackets, leggings and long shirts. I thought I was a New Romantic. The last thing I remember ordering from a catalogue was a bedside chest of drawers in the early 1990s when I got married. We must have had to assemble them but I have blocked that from my memory.

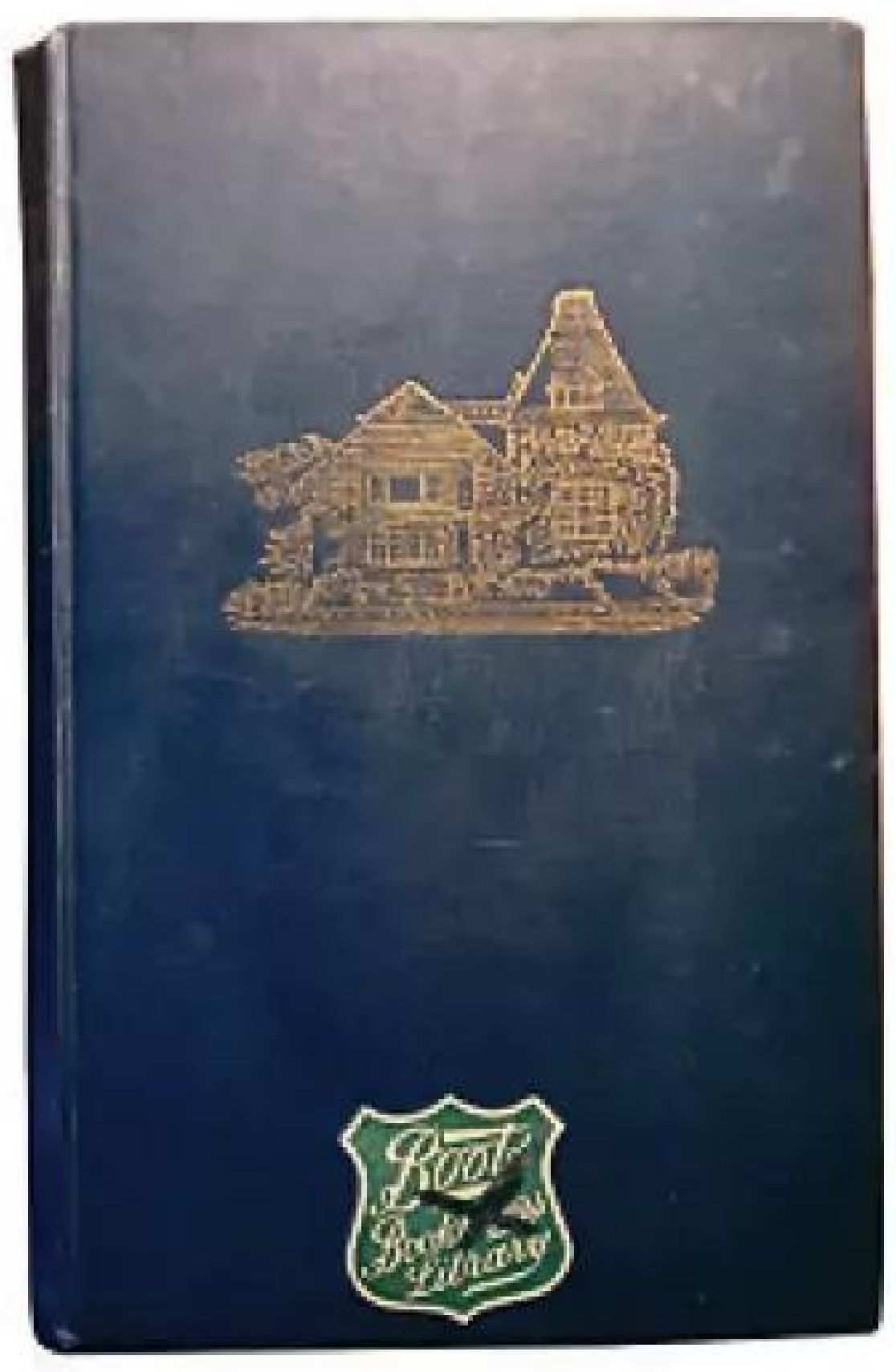
On reflection, the catalogue companies must have had vast warehouses, just as Amazon has today, but I didn't think of that or know where they were at the time. I know it's so easy to look online and order whatever you want now. And there can sometimes be options on how to pay – watch those interest rates – but it just isn't the same as those early paper versions of internet shopping. Thinking about them, I can even smell the aroma of the glossy pages.

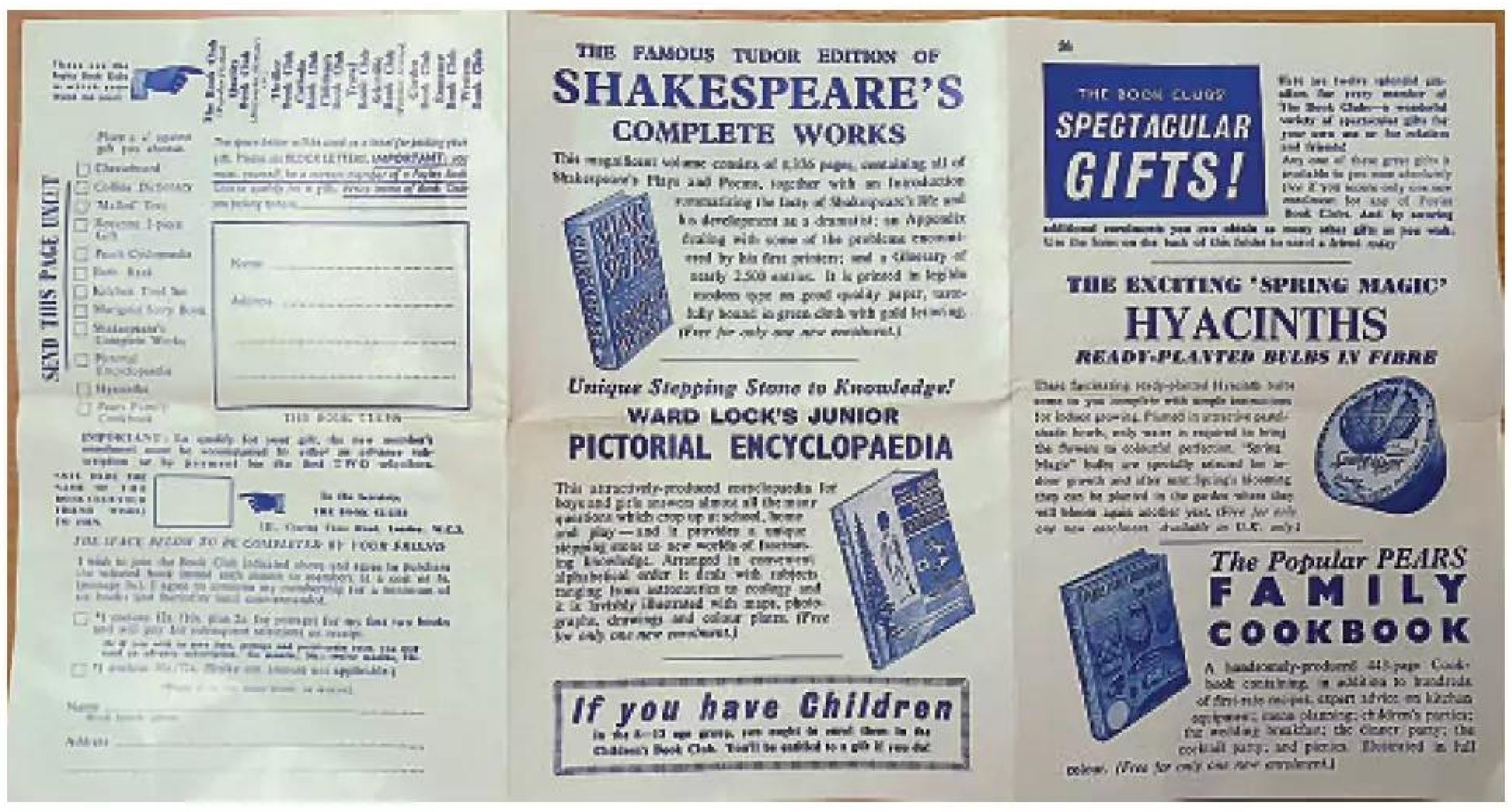
I had a look online at some of the old photos from the catalogues and they're a fantastic historical snapshot of the time with the fashions, gadgets and furniture. The browns, mustards and oranges of the early 1970s are especially reminiscent of the time.

Those behemoth books are no longer produced as they became victims of internet shopping. But I remember them fondly and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Putting the Boot In

Simon Smith of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan remembers:





SEND THIS PAGE UNCUT

THE FAMOUS TUDOR EDITION OF
SHAKESPEARE'S
COMPLETE WORKS

Unique Stepping Stone to Knowledge!
WARD LOCK'S JUNIOR
PICTORIAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA

If you have Children

THE BOOK CLUBS' SPECTACULAR GIFTS!

THE EXCITING 'SPRING MAGIC'
HYACINTHS
READY-PLANTED BULBS IN FIBRE

The Popular PEARS
FAMILY
COOKBOOK

Left: Simon was intrigued to find the cover of one of the books he ordered adorned with the Boots Book-Lovers' Library logo. Right: Found inside a nearly new book published 50 years ago, The Book Club leaflet served to advertise a range of other paraphernalia on its slim pages.

I tend to walk with one foot (and a good deal of my imagination) in the past. Don't get me wrong, I live in a house with many of the expected mod cons, and I am a user of smartphones, computer devices and streaming entertainment platforms, so I enjoy the ease and convenience of 21st century technology as much as anyone else. To say otherwise would make me a hypocrite. However, despite being a generally modern male, I am a firm believer that there is much to be enjoyed about, and learned from, the past, and in the idea that nostalgia is not a bad thing.

This viewpoint is particularly true of my tastes in entertainment. I do not listen to contemporary chart music as I believe modern songwriters are not a patch on those of the past, such as Paul Simon, Lennon and McCartney, and Gerry Rafferty to name just a few.

For very different reasons, I rarely dip into modern books either. With millions of new books published each year, the scope for new learning and new ideas is boundless but, by extension, this also means that the scope for *old* learning and ideas is equally so. Just because an idea or a thought may be decades, or even centuries, old, it does not necessarily lack the quality of modern thinking, in the same way that many vintage objects from cars to furniture are often highly sought after for reasons ranging from their durability to the quality of their craftsmanship.

I particularly enjoy reading collections of essays, with some recent acquisitions being another two collections by Richard Church, a mid-20th century poet, essayist and novelist, to add to my own personal library. I browsed the books on an auction website, clicked "buy it now", and eagerly awaited the delivery of my new – well, new to me – books.

When they arrived, I was intrigued to find the cover of one of the books adorned with a green shield, emblazoned with the name Boots Book-Lovers' Library. Never having heard of this before, I looked it up to discover a nearly 70-year-old institution spanning two centuries. Established by Florence Boot, wife of Jesse Boot, the son of the founder of the Boots pharmacy chain, Boots Book-Lovers' Library was founded upon the philanthropic principle that books should be accessible to all, in an era before access to public libraries was openly available. Until the passage of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, lenders could walk into their local Boots store and pick up works of literature along with their toiletries and pharmaceutical orders. I had already learned something without even opening the volume.

Where that first book was clearly well-used and much appreciated, its counterpart was the complete opposite and looked like it hadn't been read in the 50 or so years since its publication – the immaculate dust jacket was still in place and the hardback spine made a satisfying cracking noise as I opened it for perhaps the very first time.

As I prised open those pages, a leaflet fluttered down into my lap and immediately, a faint, gentle hint of pipe smoke rose up and filled my nostrils. I flicked through the leaflet out of curiosity as I breathed in that heady aroma, transporting me back to endless Sunday afternoons in a pristine parlour containing a polished mahogany bookcase populated by volumes of essays, stories and poems. In a comfortable wing-back chair in the corner, a middle-aged gentleman sat at ease, puffing quietly at his pipe.

The slowness of his rhythm was an antidote to the loud, insistent tick-tick-tick of the clock on the wall trying its best to drag time onward, while those slow spirals of smoke languidly slowed it to a crawl as they trailed through the air like passing clouds. Flexing, flowing, unfurling, they gently billowed into every corner of the room, some escaping through the intricate patterns of a laced net curtain and out through an open window, while others curled in between the untouched pages of those books where they nestled and faded through the years and into memory, both real and imagined.

The leaflet, too, printed by The Book Club, spoke of the simple domesticity of a bygone era, clearly indicated where, and how, our dreamed-of pipe smoker filled his shelves, but also served to advertise a range of other paraphernalia on its slim pages. I placed the leaflet gently to one side and opened the book, delving for a quiet hour into its beautiful words and its nuggets of wisdom, daydreaming all the while about the members of that illusory household, their personalities and backstories, all their foibles and quirks.

Times change, of course, and such an imagined scene is no longer representative of the everyday average family. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing is all down to personal experience and belief, but one thing is irrefutable, regardless of such opinions: words and thoughts, even those from a bygone era, their ability to communicate and to conjure up the unknown, to ignite education and imagination, are just as important now as they have ever been. Long may this be the case.

St Tropez or Bust

Tim Kirton of High Peak, Derbyshire remembers:

When I had just turned 16 in the Easter holidays of 1976, my best friend Rob Harris and I decided it would be a good idea to hitchhike from Reigate in Surrey, where we lived, to the south of France and sample the high life for a few days in St Tropez. Surprisingly our parents allowed us to go, probably out of relief and the prospect of some respite from teenage angst. We packed some scant belongings: a couple of T-shirts, some socks, beach towels and a tiny two-man tent.

My father offered to give us a lift to Dover to ease our journey, for which we were both grateful, and we boarded the ferry to Boulogne-sur-Mer. We were on our way. Dressed only in jeans and T-shirts, we were freezing. We had thought the weather in France was always warm and sunny. We were wrong.

Walking off on the French side, it was the first time my feet had touched foreign soil. The coffee in the town was dark and strong but it tasted good, exotic somehow. The ham and cheese baguette was enormous and exquisite. Not like the sandwiches back home that were bland and tasteless.

We really felt like we were abroad and couldn't have been happier. Sitting on a park bench, we got out the map and plotted our route south. Rob had been to France with his parents and told me the quickest way would be on the A roads. If all went according to plan and we got good lifts, we could be there in as little as 12 hours.

For some reason that I still can't fathom, we decided, on a whim, that a scenic coastal route to Le Touquet, where there was a campsite, would be more agreeable and we could head directly south from there. Big mistake.

We bought some Orangina and another baguette each and stuck our thumbs out on the D940. We should have made it in a couple of hours if we got lucky. We didn't get lucky. The first few cars didn't even slow down to rubberneck at us, which was unusual. We started to walk and the bitter wind cut through us mercilessly. The passing cars became fewer and fewer. Citroën 2CV after Citroën 2CV wafted past us without even a cursory glance. Then, thankfully, a Renault 4 pulled up alongside us and the driver stuck his head through the idiosyncratic pop-up side window and asked: "Ou allez vous? Quel est votre destination?"

We answered in what we thought was our best French: "Nous allons a Le Touquet, monsieur, s'il vous plaît."

He pulled his head back in the car, waved his hand out the window dismissively and shouted: "Anglais. Boff," and then drove off leaving us in a thick cloud of dust.

Disillusioned and disappointed, we trudged on through the villages of Condette, Neufchâtel-Hardelot, Dannes, and Camiers. Everywhere was closed and no one else bothered to stop. The unfamiliar tree-lined roads were monotonous, and the hours clicked slowly by.

I'm not sure how long we walked for but we finally arrived at the Le Touquet campsite late at night, exhausted. It was pitch black and no one was there to sign us in, so we walked through the latch gate as quietly as we could and set up camp.

Very early the next morning we were unexpectedly alerted to violent tent shaking and loud shouting. We unzipped the canvas and came face to face with a very irate red-faced man gesturing and pointing at us, saying: "Non. Non. C'est pas possible. C'est pas possible." He then bent down and began to remove our tent pegs.

As we extricated ourselves from our rapidly collapsing tent, we quickly realised our catastrophic faux pas. Somehow, instead of walking through the campsite entrance as we had thought, we had mistakenly entered through this man's garden gate which housed his static caravan and pitched our tent about two feet from his front door. We hurriedly decamped, paid our fees at the office and left rather sheepishly.

Luckily for us, a beautiful turquoise Citroën DS and an equally beautiful Frenchwoman offered us a lift to Abbeville. She was commuting to work, spoke good English and told us that from where she would drop us off, we could easily get a lift to Amiens and then hook up with the routes south. The blazing sun and azure sky of St Tropez were getting closer.

We waited at the intersection for an hour or so and then, to avoid freezing to death, we started to walk in the direction of Amiens which was some 25 miles south. All in all, we must have covered at least half that journey "a pied" and then, out of the blue, a battered old tractor picked us up and took us the remaining 10 miles or so. He was a lovely old farmer who talked constantly in some French patois that we didn't understand but he seemed happy with our company. He stopped to let us off right outside Amiens railway station.

Shivering and blue with cold, we didn't even discuss our next move: just instinctively bought two train tickets back to Boulogne and hopped on the first ferry back to England where warm clothes and home comforts awaited.

St Tropez would have to wait.

Left: Attempting to hitchhike from Reigate to the south of France, an exhausted Tim, pictured inset, finally arrived at the Le Touquet late at night.

MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE

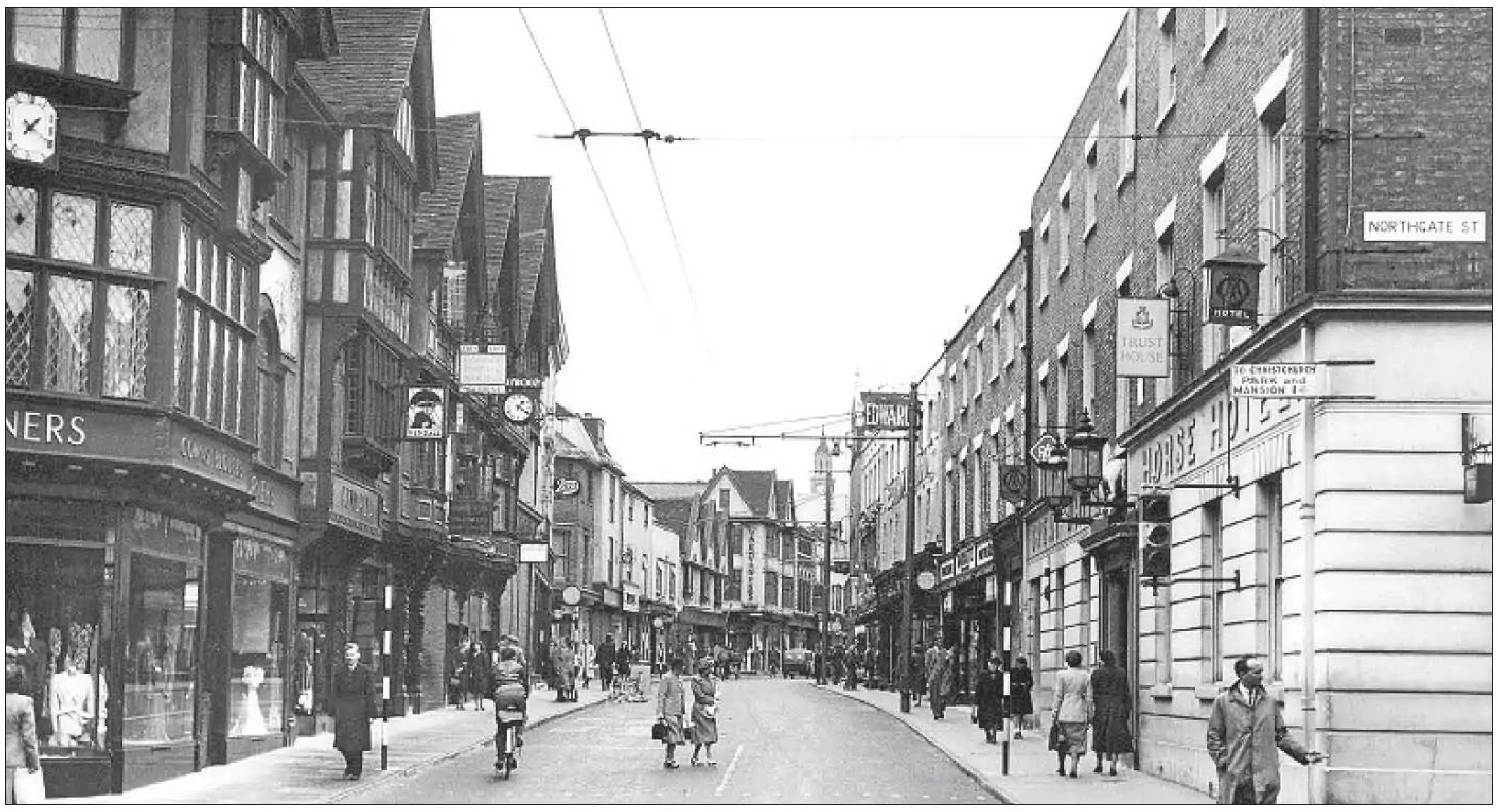
Lodging house memories from The Francis Frith Collection

Tavern Street, Ipswich, Suffolk

(Photograph taken around 1955)

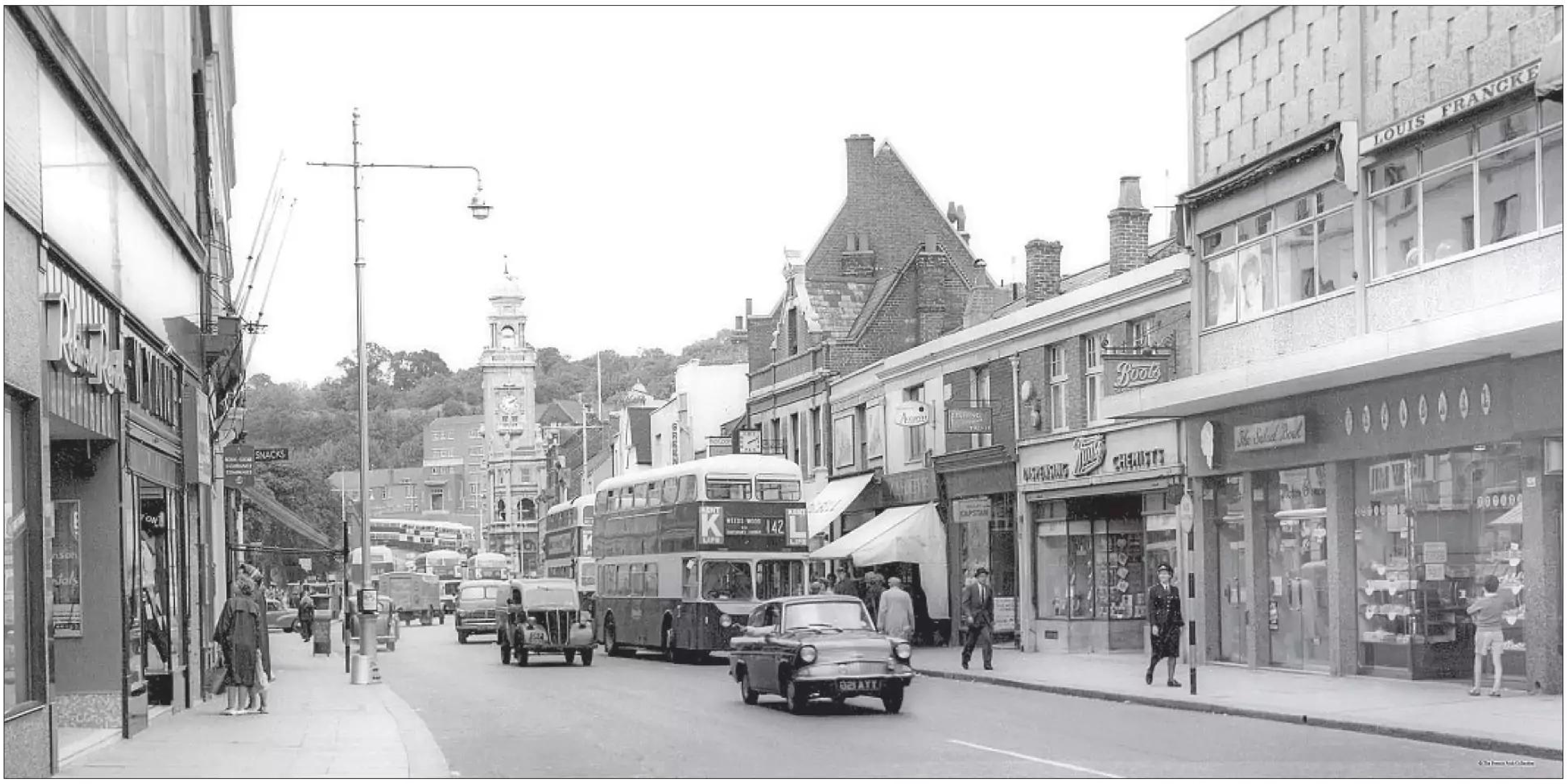
In early 1960, I had been working in Ilford on C & A Modes' new shop. When the job there was finished, I was sent to Frederick Corder's department store in Tavern Street, Ipswich, to help out with the shopfitting renovations which, for me, was two weeks' work. I lodged in a terraced house; we bedded down in one house and had our meals in a house next door (same owner). These two houses were connected by way of a cellar, it was very basic accommodation, the meals though, I would say, were very substantial.

Anthony Williams


NERS
NORTHGATE ST
TRUST HOUSE
HOTEL
TO CHRISTCHURCH PARK and MANSION
HOUSE HOTEL

Military Road, Chatham, Kent

(Photograph taken around 1965)


LOUIS FRANCKE
Boots
SNACKS
K
L
142
Dolcis
CAPSTAN
© The Francis Frith Collection

My first job in 1976 was working as an office junior at Brown Brothers in Clover Street. I rented a bedsit in Rochester Street up by Chatham station the following year for £4 a week, half of my £8 wages. It had a slot meter TV that ate 10 pences, and another slot meter for the gas. Six bedsits shared one bathroom and yes, you've guessed it, another slot meter for the bathroom boiler.

Anonymous

Burnopfield, County Durham

(Photograph taken around 1955)

I was called up as a Bevin Boy in April 1944 and, after a rather indifferent training at Annfield Plain Training Centre, was sent to the Hobson Pit, as I was staying at the time in lodgings in Burnopfield with a Mrs Crisp, husband Tommy and her two sons, Stan and Robert. There were two other Bevin Boys occupying the house as well, so sleeping arrangements were cramped, to say the least. I finished up staying with Maggie and Johnny Hughes at 1 Palm Terrace, Tantobie, where there were also two Scottish Bevin Boys, and we had a whale of a time there. I enjoyed the pit work and finished up as an onsetter at the main shaft, serving the Hutton and Brockwell seams. The pitmen were very good to me, but as their geography was hazy, and I came from the Isle of Wight, they called me "the bloody Cornishman".

George Rayner

Cardiff Castle

(Photograph taken in 1893)

My nan Mrs Laura Dowse had a lodging house 4 Beauchamp Street Riverside, for many years. Many a celebrity from the New Theatre lodged at my nan's and the speedway drivers used to stay there too. Hughie Green, Max Bygraves and many a famous name stayed there, Nan was a legend, who held fantastic parties. She really was a great hostess who would only serve the best quality. I remember House of Holland on the crossroads, Billy's the grocers, Nick's the general store, and the local butchers all relying on my nan's business, even the local fish and chip shop would fry up early for her on a Friday. The lodgers always had battered fish on a Friday and, if it wasn't good enough, she would send it back.

Jayne Hurley

The Francis Frith Collection

Over 150 years ago, pioneering Victorian photographer Francis Frith set up his company with the grand plan of photographing all the cities, towns and villages of Britain. His two sons, and later his grandson, continued Frith's massive task, and The Francis Frith Collection now contains more than 360,000 images taken between 1860 and 1970. Over 250,000 images are available to view online. Prints of the Frith photographs, as well as a wide range of other products and local history books, featuring these vintage images, are available from the website francisfrith.com

Share Your Memories

The Francis Frith Collection invites you to visit the website and add memories to the places featured in the photographs, or comment on others already added. Seeing a place from your past can rekindle forgotten or long-held memories. Why not add your story for others to read and enjoy – making your memories and stories part of this growing chronicle of British life?

LINCOLNSHIRE AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

EAST KIRKBY, SPILSBY, LINCOLNSHIRE, PE23 4DE, A155

Sat 24th & Mon 26th May

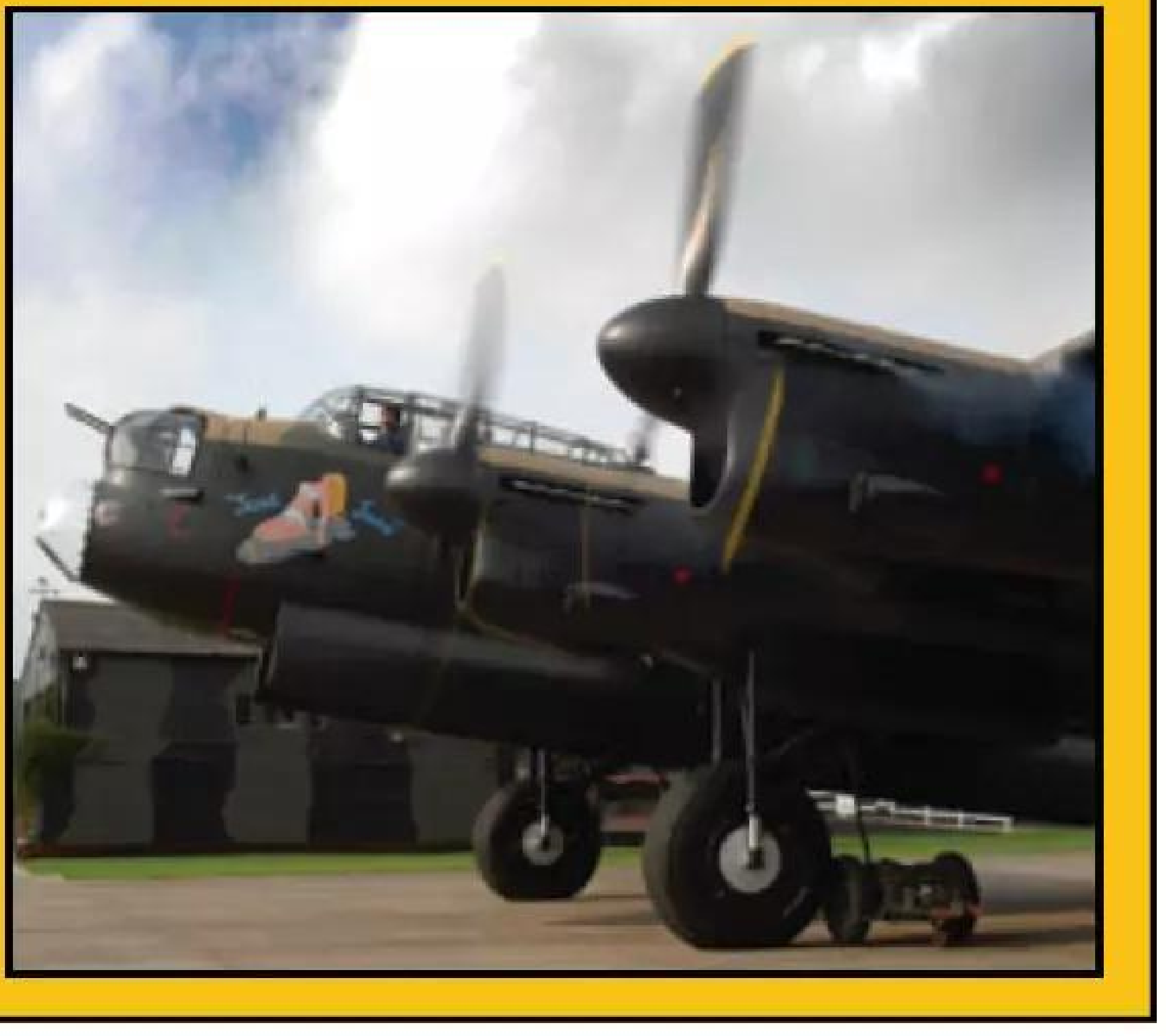
LANCASTER & MOSQUITO taxy runs

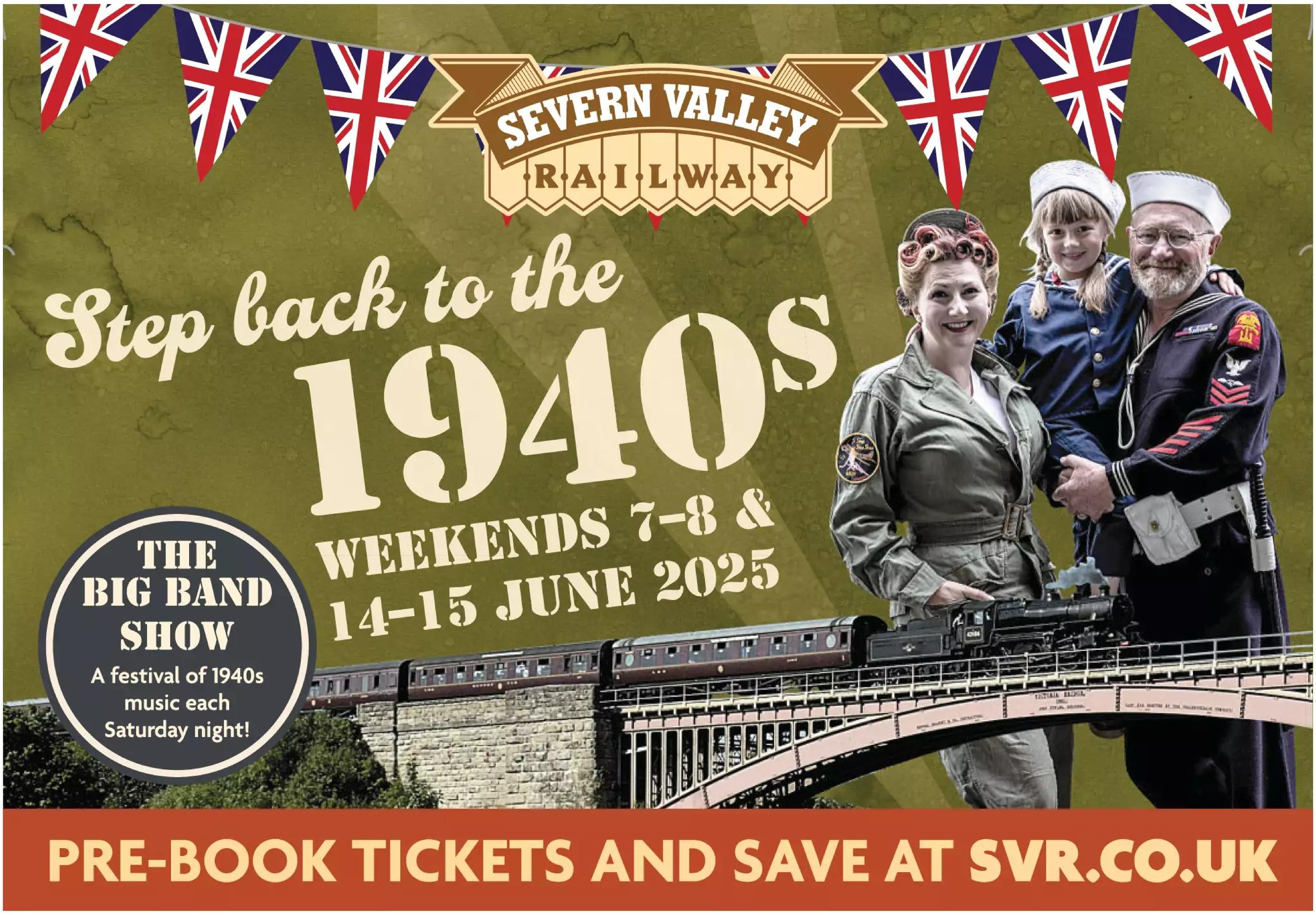
Real firing M5 STUART & T34 TANK with explosions!!

Flying displays, reenactors, military vehicles, trade stands & cockpit viewings. Step back in time…..

www.lincsaviation.co.uk 01790 763207

DESTROYER
D-2
USA

SILKSHEEN PHOTOGRAPHY



SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY
Step back to the 1940s
WEEKENDS 7-8 & 14-15 JUNE 2025
THE BIG BAND SHOW

A festival of 1940s music each Saturday night!

PRE-BOOK TICKETS AND SAVE AT SVR.CO.UK

FORTIES
POST
A Salute to the '40s

HOME GUARD
SX
23

THIS SEASON'S MUST-SEE EVENTS

REJUBILATION

John Greeves looks back to how victory in Europe was celebrated and ahead to the programme of events to mark VE Day 80

On 8 May 1945, millions of people took to the streets to celebrate the end of World War Two. In Europe, events had moved rapidly with the announcement of Hitler's death on 30 April leaving Admiral Karl Dönitz as the named successor to negotiate the end of the war. The allies decided not to declare peace until Germany had signed an unconditional surrender. It wasn't until 7 May at 7.40pm that the BBC interrupted its scheduled programming, with a news flash announcing 8 May as a national holiday to celebrate victory in Europe. Winston Churchill, the prime minister, had already gained assurances from the ministry of food that sufficient supplies of beer existed in the capital. People would also be able to purchase red, white and blue bunting without using their ration coupons.

A rush was on to produce commemorative items for the celebrations, including VE Day mugs, after the radio announcement but some people simply couldn't wait to begin their festivities after years of restrictions, with rationing, blackouts, and endless bombing raids. On the eve of VE Day, many pubs were already full of revellers, beacons and bonfires were lit, while some defied blackout regulations and drew back their curtains in eager anticipation. Villages, towns and cities across Britain suddenly saw a profusion of flags and bunting line the streets as celebratory fervour gripped the nation.

As midnight struck, the big ships at anchor in ports from the Firth of Clyde to Southampton blew their sirens, which could be heard for miles around, while searchlights flashed out a "V" in morse code across the darkened sky. Communities across Britain awoke to share in this special moment, celebrating in parades, thanksgiving services and street parties, while joy-crazed crowds took to the streets.

In London, flags could be seen everywhere as an estimated 50,000 people lined the approaches to Piccadilly Circus. Elsewhere in the capital, pavements were packed with surging crowds listening to music provided by gramophones, accordions and even barrel organs as revellers sang and danced to popular tunes.

As the day progressed, everyone seemed to want to climb something in Trafalgar Square. In Piccadilly, total strangers embraced, joining the conga, or singing Knees Up Mother Brown, or a rendition of Vera Lynn's There'll Always Be an England. Outside Buckingham Palace, the crowd cheered and chanted: "We want the king."

At 3pm, Winston Churchill made a speech to the nation from Downing Street which was relayed by speakers in Parliament Square. A great cheer went up when he announced the liberation of the Channel Islands which had been occupied since 1940. The prime minister mirrored the sense of joy and relief but was quick to remind listeners that although the war in Europe was won, conflict still existed: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil

Top: VE Day revellers run towards Buckingham Palace in a bid to see the royal family.

Photographs: (Palace) Crown Copyright

Left: Pipe Major Lady Jane MacRae will lead 20 Scottish pipers as a tribute to the fallen of World War Two. Right: The late Queen Elizabeth II and Duke of Edinburgh, with pageant master Bruno Peek, at the lighting of a beacon to celebrate VE Day 70.

and efforts that lie ahead." Hostilities would continue for three months against Japan until VJ Day on 15 August.

Despite his stammer, King George VI gave his longest speech to the nation praising his subjects and calling for a lasting peace. Huge crowds had surged down The Mall to Buckingham Palace where the king, Queen Elizabeth and princesses Elizabeth and Margaret made numerous appearances during the day to cheering crowds. The king wore his naval uniform and Princess Elizabeth that of a subaltern in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. The royal family would appear eight times to riotous cheers and finally with the man of the moment, the prime minister. The two young princesses were allowed to leave the palace and to mingle anonymously with the festive crowd below. The late Queen Elizabeth II, reflecting on the day, said it was one of the most memorable nights of her life.

Celebrations continued across the UK throughout the day. As night fell, numerous bonfires were lit across the land and fireworks peppered the skies while licensing hours were extended so the end of the war could be toasted.

However, VE Day was not a jubilant event for everyone. For many it was a quiet period of reflection as they mourned their loved ones, or worried about family members still serving overseas in the theatre of war. Many servicemen, too, had not returned and were still prisoners in PoW camps. It would a long and painful wait until they knew their loved ones were safe. Others were simply far too exhausted, weary and spent by the endless hardship of war to savour the joys of victory after years of conflict.

Now, pageant master Bruno Peek has organised VE Day 80 celebrations, so present generations won't forget the significance of this day. As he says: "I think it's important to remember every year 8 May as well as the sacrifice made by so many for the freedom we all enjoy today. It's appropriate to celebrate these milestones for those who gave so much and who wanted nothing in return except peace."

For more than 40 years, Mr Peek has conceived and organised major national and international events such as the golden, diamond and platinum jubilees for the late Queen Elizabeth II along with her 90th birthday celebrations. He also organised the successful VE Day 70 and even more recently D-day 80. Such major events may take two to three years in the planning, but Mr Peek is determined to make VE Day 80 a national event, celebrated in all local communities throughout the UK and to commemorate and remember the people who fought and sacrificed their lives for their country.

Countdown to VE Day 80 will start in Scotland with Pipe Major Lady Jane MacRae who will lead 20 Scottish pipers as a tribute to the fallen of World War Two. The piping will take place daily at noon until 8 May at different locations throughout Scotland.

The actual day will begin with the raising of the specially designed VE flag across the UK. Town criers will deliver a special proclamation about the day and those we should remember. During the day, celebrations will be ongoing with parties organised in streets, gardens, care homes, churches, villages, town halls, pubs, clubs and hotels.

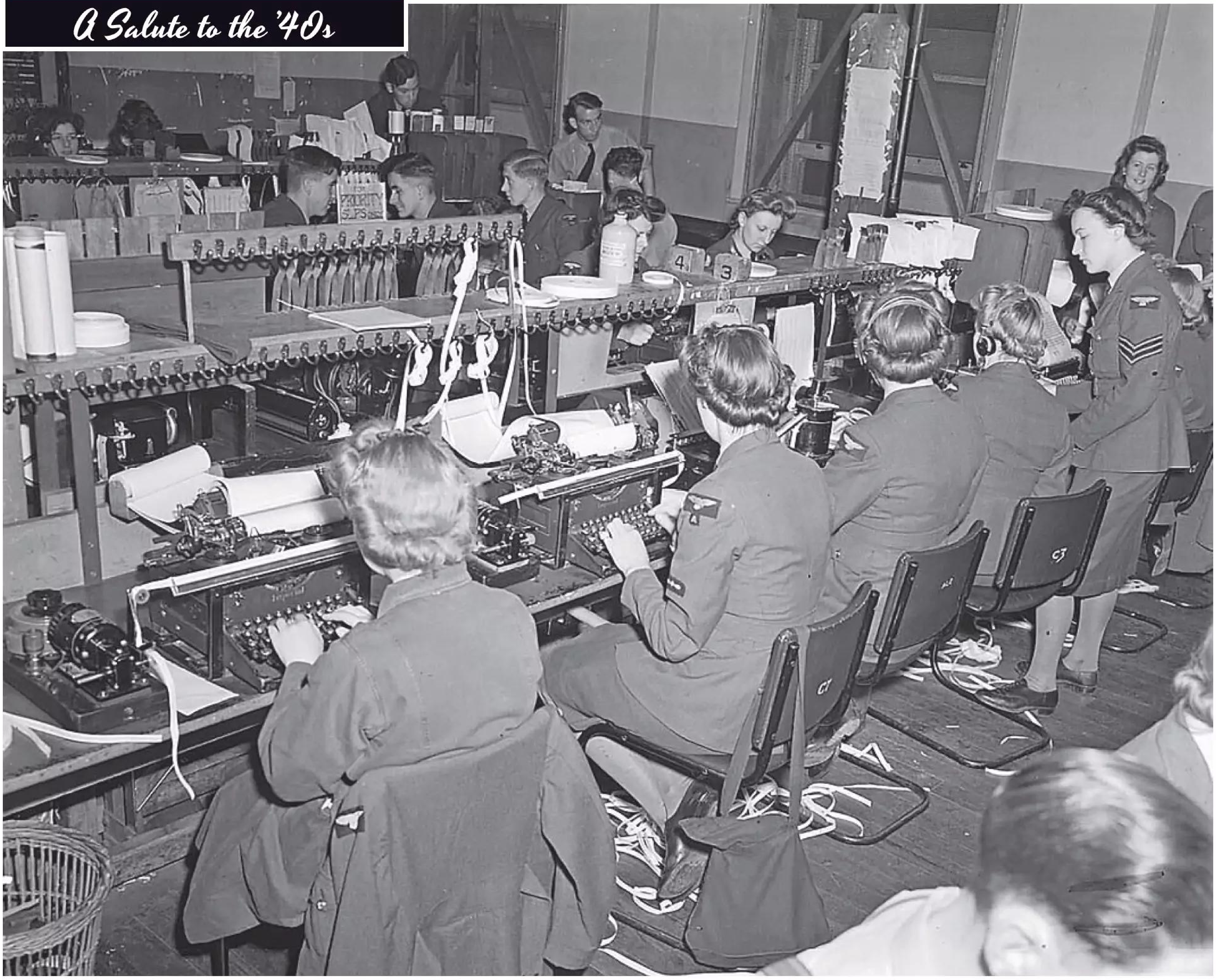
Besides flags and bunting, the Women's Institute has contributed a special recipe for orange and ginger cake. The origins span World War One through to World War Two and require no whisks or modern food mixers. WI members were integral to the war effort helping in their numerous tasks with the evacuation of 1.5 million children, raising money, operating market stalls, knitting for the troops and gathering rose hips, a rich source of Vitamin C.

Other tributes are to the unsung fishermen, farmers and land girls. Fish was a natural resource and fish and chips were not rationed during the war. Crews faced a constant danger from U-boats, enemy aircraft and mines as they set sail to the fishing grounds knowing the enemy were determined to sink their small, defenceless vessels. If party food isn't for you, then VE Day 80 is encouraging you to eat the traditional fare of fish and chips as tribute to those who put food on the plate 80 years ago.

At noon, four pipers will be playing a specially composed tune, Celebratum, from the top of the highest peaks in Scotland (Ben Nevis 1,345m), Wales (Snowdon/ Yr Wyddfa, 1,085m), England (Scafell Pike, 978m) and Northern Ireland (Slieve Donard, 850m). Audiences will also be entertained during the day with theatre performances depicting this period in time. Gorleston Pavilion Trust in Norfolk, for instance, will be holding a series of events taking place during the day, followed by a special performance in the evening. As evening draws in, bells will ring out from across the land from hundreds of cathedrals and churches. As night falls, people will gather to light beacons, bonfires and lamps of peace at 9.30pm. A Victory in Europe tribute will be read and it is planned communities will come together to sing I Vow to Thee My Country.

Bruno tells me the words apply to all people: "Anybody can sing it regardless of race, creed, colour or nationality and it can be sung to bring together families and communities into one common celebration on the anniversary of VE Day 80."

For more information about VE Day 80 and participation, go to veday80.org.uk



Above: One of Hazel's duties was to type the details of those airmen who had not returned from operations the previous night.

Photographs: (Waafs/Lancaster) Crown Copyright

THE PERFECT WAAF

Ron McGill recalls Hazel Kirby, a colleague of his in the 1950s who had served in Bomber Command

My working life as a telegraphist with the GPO began when I was 16 years old and following my initial two-year period delivering telegrams in and around west London in 1944. After my National Service in the RAF (1949/50) I had returned to my telegraphist life at the Central Telegraph Office in the City of London.

This work at all hours of the day and night was demanding and sometimes a bit hectic with high volumes of telegrams to be transmitted. It was indeed a busy office with a staff of over 2,000 operators. We had a system in those days known as "duplex working" where two operators would staff a busy circuit to a major UK town – one would do the transmitting and the other would receive the town's messages in return on gummed tape that the operator would stick on the telegram form for delivery.

It was quite common for these two pairs of operators to become friends, and it was known for some to get married. When this happened, the CTO became known as the "marriage bureau". This working together for hours at a time did form special friendships and I was one such case. One day I found myself working with a delightful (and astonishingly attractive) lady in her mid-30s. She proved to be great fun, and we

Left: With her fair hair and bright green eyes, Hazel was considered the office beauty. Right: An Avro Lancaster B Mark III pauses on the flarepath at RAF Elsham Wolds, where Hazel was based during World War Two.

enjoyed our chats between the bouts of work pressures. With her fair hair and bright green eyes, I later found out she was the office beauty, whereas I was just a young and scruffy 20-year-old. But, as she had no children, she felt quite maternal towards me as the son she never had.

We had the RAF connection between us, I was newly demobbed from the RAF and Hazel had been a Waaf when she joined up in 1941 and served right through to 1945 when she was demobbed and joined the GPO – continuing her role as a teleprinter operator.

In one of our chatting periods, she told me after her initial RAF training she had been posted to a series of Bomber Command operational airfields mostly in Lincolnshire and that her main posting had been to the famous Elsham Wolds station. She found the duties hard and, at times, very upsetting for one of her morning tasks on the teleprinters was to type the names and details of those airmen who had not returned from operations the previous night over Germany.

Hazel found that she was typing the names of many of her aircrew boyfriends who were now missing and she found this so upsetting. Some she had even been to a dance or pub visit with the previous evening when they had been off duty. Hazel never ever came to terms with the constant loss of her friends.

> **“Hazel never ever came to terms with the constant loss of her friends.”**

She did become very close to some of the airmen, and, in fact, she had to agree to become “officially” engaged to them – which happened five times – as the men just wanted something permanent to come back to. She realised only too well that the engagement may not last long as the casualty rate for aircrew in Bomber Command was one of the highest in the armed forces during the war. This sadly proved to be the case, for all five of her would be partners went missing.

One day, one of her Waaf friends told her that some of the aircrew lads were regarding her as being unlucky, anyone getting close to her would more than likely go missing quite quickly. This news upset her even more and she swore she would not get too involved with another operational airman until the war was over.

Hazel stuck with the policy and at the end of the war, she got engaged and married to Bill Kirby who was a ground wireless mechanic and not on operations. They both were demobbed at the same time, and they left the RAF, Bill to join the Press Association and Hazel to join the GPO as an operator.

Bill was a grand fellow and we quickly became firm friends, and he used to collect some of my early attempts at oil paintings and ended up with quite a collection. They both had a very happy life together and she just loved singing Just My Bill. They bought a house at Chadwell Heath, Essex until they both retired in the early 1980s.

They moved to Eastbourne and Bill took up sea fishing which he loved while Hazel was happy to stay at home looking after her pet cats and spending lots of money in the clothing shops of the town. Her sad experiences in the Waaf were long gone but when we met, we would chat away about those times and the daily drama on an operational station.

Bill was sadly stricken with cancer in the late 1980s and Hazel continued to live in Eastbourne into her 90s when, in the end, she had to finish her days in a British Legion care home for service veterans.

Looking back, I realise that Hazel was one of those lucky ladies who had perfect bone structure in their features – no wonder she remained such a good-looking lady right to the end.

THE DANCE DIRECTORY

APRIL

04 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

Record hop with Paul, the resident swing DJ. Entry £9 on the door, licensed bar, free car park, large wooden dancefloor.

The Exning Road Club, 54 Exning Road, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 0AB (01763 242949, getintheswing.com)

11 JIMMY'S JOINT SWINGING RECORD HOP (8-11PM)

All swing styles and levels welcome with a mix of great boogie woogie, blues and swing tunes to dance along to. Licensed bar, free car park. Entry £8 on the door (cash or card).

King's Stanley Village Hall, Broad Street, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL10 3PN (07909 536329, justjivelindyhop.co.uk)

25 DURSLEY SWING DANCE (8-11PM)

Jim will be playing swing, jump, jive and boogie, just bring your dancing feet. There is a licensed bar (card payments only), please do not bring your own drinks. Entry £8 on the door (cash or card).

The Chantry Centre, Listers Hall, Long Street, Dursley, Gloucestershire GL11 4JB (07909 536329, justjivelindyhop.co.uk)

26 SATURDAY SOCIAL (7-10PM)

All swing styles and levels welcome as there will be a mix of great tunes to dance along to. Entry £8 on the door (cash or card). There is no bar so bring your own. Tea, coffee and soft drinks are provided.

St Margaret's Church Centre, Kenwin Close, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 4NY (07909 536329, justjivelindyhop.co.uk)

MAY

02 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

08 VE DAY 80 FREE CONCERT (2-3.30PM)

A free open-air concert commemorating VE Day on its 80th anniversary with the Blighty Belles, a professional vintage vocal group specialising in music from the 1940s.

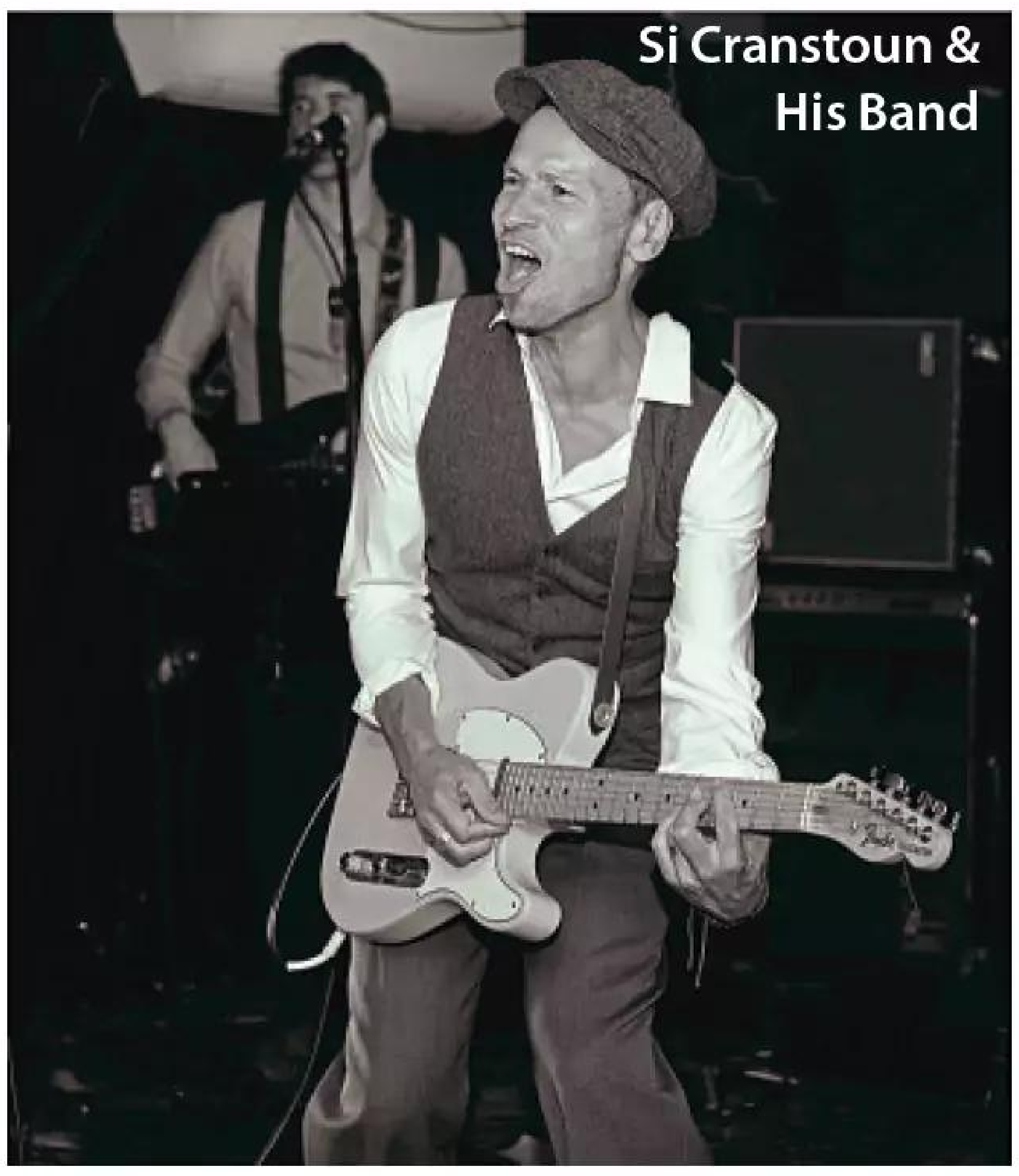
International Bomber Command Centre, Canwick Avenue, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN4 2HQ (01522 514755, internationalbcc.co.uk)

The Alkaseltzer Sisters

08 VE DAY 80 BEACON LIGHTING AND DINNER (7-11PM)

Marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day with an evening including a prosecco reception, two-course dinner including a celebration of National Fish and Chip Day set as the dish to commemorate this special day, beacon lighting at the Spire, and an evening dance with Lincolnshire's very own Blighty Belles. Tickets £50 each, £25 each for children.

International Bomber Command Centre, Canwick Avenue, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN4 2HQ (01522 514755, internationalbcc.digitickets.co.uk/event-tickets/62337)


Si Cranstoun & His Band

09 JIMMY'S JOINT SWINGING RECORD HOP (8-11PM)

(See 11 April)

10 80TH ANNIVERSARY VE DAY DANCE (7.45-11PM)

With the Alkaseltzer Sisters, DJ and resident band Rhythm Exchange. Tickets £12, booking encouraged.

Huntington Working Men's Club, 1 North Moor Road, Huntington, York, North Yorkshire YO32 9QS (07949 144313, yorkvintagedance.co.uk)

24 SATURDAY SOCIAL (7-10PM)

(See 26 April)

30 DURSLEY SWING DANCE (8-11PM)

(See 25 April)

JUNE

06 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

13 JIMMY'S JOINT SWINGING RECORD HOP (8-11PM)

(See 11 April)

21 1940s BIG BAND NIGHT (6PM)

Dance the night away with the Phil Dando Big Band, celebrating the 80th VE and VJ Day anniversaries. Bar, street food and a prize raffle.

Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre, Royal Dockyard Chapel, Meyrick Owen Way, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire SA72 6WS (01646 684220, pdht.org)

27 DURSLEY SWING DANCE (8-11PM)

(See 25 April)

28 SATURDAY SOCIAL (7-10PM)

(See 26 April)

JULY

04 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

12 1940s EVENING (7PM)

Step back to the 1940s as we transform our streets and houses into a home front community. Enjoy a host of live music and entertainment. Tickets £20 (adult), £16 (three – 15 years) and £10 (essential carer).

Black Country Living Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ (0121 557 9643, bclm.com)

18 JIMMY'S JOINT SWINGING RECORD HOP (8-11PM)

(See 11 April)

25 DURSLEY SWING DANCE (8-11PM)

(See 25 April)

AUGUST

01 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

The Phil Dando Big Band

16 1940s HANGAR DANCE (7.30-11.30PM)

Music provided by the Swing Machine Big Band. Licensed bar and a variety of street food available to buy in addition to ticket price. You may also bring a picnic. Advance tickets only: standard £16, table of eight £112, VIP deluxe champagne table of eight £225 (includes champagne, as well as hot street food and dessert served to you at your table).

Norfolk Tank Museum, Station Road, Forncett St Peter, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 1HZ (01508 532650, norfolktankmuseum.co.uk)

16 THE ORIGINAL 1940s DANCE 2025 (7.30-11.30PM)

Returning to the Lowther Pavilion during Lytham's 1940s Weekend, dance the night away to your favourite wartime tunes. Ticket and ration pack £30 (early bird discount £27.50).

Lowther Pavilion Theatre, West Beach, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire FY8 5QQ (01253 794221, lowtherpavilion.co.uk)

30 1940s THEMED DINNER DANCE (7PM)

The D-day Darlings will be performing live at The Victory Show 20th anniversary evening dinner dance. Enjoy a four-course dinner with a fully licensed bar and lots more entertainment. Take a trip down memory lane and enjoy the period sounds of Paul Harper.

The Victory Show, Foxlands Farm, Cosby, Leicestershire LE9 1SG (thevictoryshow.co.uk)

SEPTEMBER

05 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

OCTOBER

03 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

11 40s & 50s VULCAN HANGAR DANCE (6-10.30PM)

Dance the night away with the 18-piece Sid Bolan Big Band, playing a selection of hits from the wartime and postwar years. Tickets are £20 with a reduced rate of £16 for VRT members.

Vulcan Restoration Trust, Hangar 5 South Road, London Southend Airport, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6YU (avrovulcan.com)

NOVEMBER

07 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

29 SUGAR TOWN STRUT (7.30PM-MIDNIGHT)

Jive and swing dance with Si Cranstoun & His Band, plus DJ Paul. Advance tickets £20 (£25 on the door), soft drinks included (anything stronger please bring your own). You are welcome to bring your own picnic.

Village Hall, Aylmer Close, Risby, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP28 6RT (01763 242949, getintheswing.com)

DECEMBER

05 RHYTHM JOINT (7.30-11.30PM)

(See 04 April)

BODRHYDDAN HALL, DYSERTH RD, RHUDDLAN, RHYL, LL18 5SB

bodrhyddan.co.uk/whats-on/

BODRHYDDAN
HALL

OVER 600 RE-ENACTORS
FIRING DEMONSTRATIONS
LIVING HISTORY DISPLAYS
LIVE MUSIC
REFRESHMENTS
& BEER TENT

NO MAN'S LAND

MULTI-PERIOD
LIVING HISTORY EVENT

SAT 12TH & SUN 13TH APRIL 2025

10AM UNTIL 4PM | GREAT FOR FAMILIES AND KIDS GO FREE!

For Reenactment groups and traders email: **admin@axisallied.co.uk**. For tickets and general enquiries email: **info@bodrhyddan.co.uk**

THIS SEASON'S MUST-SEE EVENTS

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO 1940s EVENTS IN 2025

APRIL

10 CHESTERFIELD 1940s MARKET
Town Centre, Chesterfield, Derbyshire (01246 345777, visitchesterfield.info/whats-on/chesterfield-1940s-market-p777291)

11-13 KELHAM HALL VINTAGE FESTIVAL
Kelham Hall, Nr Newark, Nottinghamshire (kelhamhallvintagefestival.co.uk)

12-13 1940s WEEKEND
Whitwell & Reepham Railway, Reepham, Norfolk (01603 871694, whitwellstation.com)

12-13 NO MAN'S LAND MULTI-PERIOD LIVING HISTORY EVENT
Bodrhyddan Hall, Rhuddlan, Rhyl, Denbighshire (01745 590155, bodrhyddan.co.uk)

19-21 1940s WEEKEND
Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft, Doncaster, South Yorkshire (01724 711846, facebook.com/trolleybusmuseum)

26-27 MILITARY HISTORY WEEKEND
The Helicopter Museum, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset (01934 635227, helicoptermuseum.co.uk)

MAY

03 THE BOLSOVER BLITZ – VE DAY 80
Market Place, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire (visitbolsover.co.uk/events/the-bolsover-blitz-ve-day-80)

03-04 FESTIVAL OF THE 40s
Desford, Leicestershire (desfordheritage.org/festival-of-the-40s-2025)

03-04 VE DAY 80TH
Middleton Hall & Gardens, Tamworth, Warwickshire (01827 283095, middleton-hall.co.uk)

Chesterfield 1940s Market

03-04 1940s WEEKEND HARBOROUGH MARKET
Market Harborough, Leicestershire (07522 232264, harboroughmarket.co.uk)

03-05 LLANDUDNO TRANSPORT FESTIVAL 2025
Bodafon Fields, Llandudno (llantransfest.co.uk)

03-05 CLASSIC COMEDY WEEKEND FT DAD'S ARMY
North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham, Norfolk (01263 820800, nnrailway.co.uk)

03-05 SANDWICH SALUTES THE 40s
Town Centre and Quay Green, Sandwich, Kent (facebook.com/SandwichSalutes)

03-05 STEAM INTO THE 40s
Didcot Railway Centre, Didcot, Oxfordshire (01235 817200, didcotrailwaycentre.co.uk)

04-05 STAVELEY 1940s AND WARTIME EVENT
Staveley Hall, Chesterfield,

Derbyshire
(07731 955439,
staveleyhall.co.uk)

08 VICTORY IN EUROPE 80TH ANNIVERSARY

Beamish Museum, Beamish,
Stanley, County Durham
(0191 370 4000, beamish.org.uk)

08 VE DAY 80TH EVENT

Clipstone Headstocks,
Clipstone, Nottinghamshire
(01623 655522,
clipstoneheadstocks.com)

09-11 WE'LL MEET AGAIN

Yorkshire Air Museum,
Elvington, York
(01904 608595,
yorkshireairmuseum.org)

10 SPIRIT OF WARTIME SHERWOOD

Thoresby Park, Newark,
Nottinghamshire
(07754 704779,
bainbridgeevents.co.uk)

10 VE DAY

Poppylands Tearoom &
Restaurant, Horsey, Norfolk
(01493 393393,
facebook.com/poppylands)

10 EASTLEIGH VE DAY 80

Leigh Road Recreation Ground,
Eastleigh, Hampshire
(07482 471421, fb.me/
e/2uN436Rfk)

10-11 1940s MELTON MOWBRAY

Play Close Park, Melton
Mowbray, Leicestershire
(meltonmowbraytownestate.
com)

10-11 BROUGHAM HALL WARTIME WEEKEND

Brougham Hall & Penrith Town
Centre, Cumbria
(facebook.com/wartimeweekend)

10-11 TEMPLE AT WAR

Cressing Temple Barns,
Braintree, Essex
(07907 594307, templeatwar.
co.uk)

10-11 VE DAY CELEBRATION

RAF Museum Midlands,
Cosford, Shropshire
(01902 376200,
rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands)

10-11 VILLAGE AT WAR

Rural Life Living Museum,
Tilford, Farnham, Surrey
(01252 795571, rural-life.org.uk)

10-11 WARTIME BRITAIN 2025: VE DAY 80

REME Museum, Lyneham,
Wiltshire
(01249 894869,
rememuseum.org.uk)

11 1940s DAY

Bressingham Steam
Museum & Gardens, Diss,
Norfolk
(01379 686900, bressingham.
co.uk)

10-11 1940s WEEKEND

Forge Mill Needle Museum,
Redditch, Worcestershire
(01527 62509, forgemill.org.uk)

17-18 HAWORTH 1940s WEEKEND

Main Street, Haworth, West
Yorkshire
(haworth1940s.com)

17-18 WAR WHEELS

Foxfield Railway, Blythe Bridge,
Stoke-on-Trent
(foxfieldrailway.co.uk)

17-18 1940s WEEKEND

Kent & East Sussex Railway,
Tenterden, Kent
(01580 765155, kesr.org.uk)

17-18 BLYTH BATTERY GOES TO WAR

Blyth beach, Northumberland
(07881 462284, blythbattery.
org.uk)

17-18 HOME FRONT WEEKEND

Amberley Museum, Near

In association with The Shopland Collection and the Invicta Military Vehicle Preservation Society.

14th & 15th June 2025

THE DIG FOR VICTORY SHOW

North Somerset Showground
Wraxall - Bristol
BS48 1NE

A 1940s FESTIVAL
fun for all generations

Live Music Steam Engines Dancing Vintage Stalls Children's Fun Tea Room & Bar 1940s Farm Classic Cars Food Stalls History Talks Make-do-and-Mend Campsite Tanks & Military Vehicles

Family Ticket £37

Adult Ticket £15

Victory Dance Tickets £15

Book in advance at: www.digforvictoryshow.com

Supporting

Follow Dig For Victory Show

The Dig For Victory Show is a Community Interest Company registered in England and Wales NO. 8894144
SHOPLAND SAWMILLS
Working with GREAT WESTERN Air Ambulance Charity
THE ROYAL MARINES CHARITY
INVICTA

Arundel, West Sussex
(01798 831370, amberleymuseum.co.uk)

17-18 THE WARTIME VILLAGE
The Village, Church Farm, Skegness, Lincolnshire
(01754 766658, thewartimevillage.weebly.com)

23-25 IRONBRIDGE WWII WEEKEND
Dale End Park, Ironbridge, Shropshire
(facebook.com/events/dale-end-park-ironbridge/ironbridge-wwii-weekend/998826271532930)

24 & 26 LANC, TANK AND MILITARY MACHINES
The Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby Airfield, Nr Spilsby, Lincolnshire
(01790 763207, lincsaviation.co.uk)

24-25 THE WARAG REVIVAL 2025
Middlezoy Aerodrome at Westonzoyland Airfield, Bridgwater, Somerset
(warag.co.uk)

24-26 BACK TO THE 40s
Helston Railway, Prospidnick, Helston, Cornwall
(01326 572977, helstonrailway.co.uk)

24-26 THE OVERLORD SHOW
The Lawns, Denmead, Hampshire
(overlordshow.co.uk)

25-26 MIDDY IN THE 1940s
Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, Brockford Station, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk
(01449 766874, mslr.org.uk)

30-01 JUNE VINTAGE NOSTALGIA FESTIVAL
Stockton Park, Stockton, Warminster, Wiltshire
(vintagenostalgiashow.co.uk)

31 MILITARY AIR SHOW 2025
Shuttleworth, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
(01767 627927, shuttleworth.org)

31-01 JUNE 1940s WEEKEND
Great Central Railway, Loughborough, Leicestershire
(01509 632323, gcrailway.co.uk)

31-01 JUNE D-DAY WEEKEND 2025
RAF Museum London, Grahame Park Way, London
(020 8205 2266, rafmuseum.org.uk/london)

31-01 JUNE WW2 WEEKEND EVENT
Abbey Station Visitor Centre, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
(07773 537564, abbeystationshrewsbury.com)

JUNE

06-07 STEP BACK TO THE 1940s
Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster, Worcestershire
(01562 757900, svr.co.uk)

07 VINTAGE EVENT
Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire
(01908 618756, newport-pagnell.org.uk)

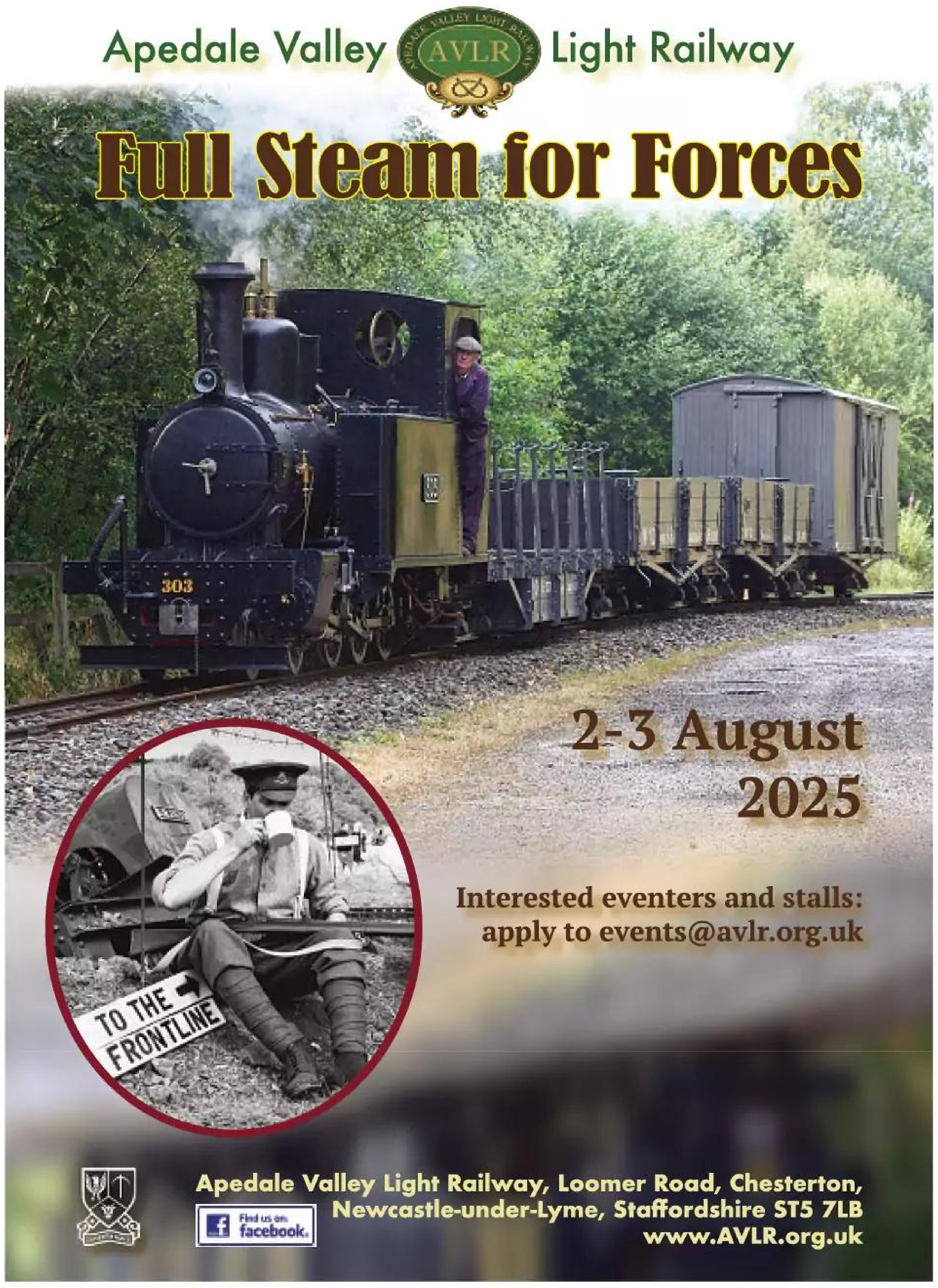
07-08 1940s WEEKEND
Heskin Hall, Chorley, Lancashire
(01257 452044, heskinhall.com)

07-08 OPERATION ASHBOURNE
Darley Moor Airfield, Ashbourne, Derbyshire
(facebook.com/events/809983107214886)

07-08 FOLKESTONE AND ASHFORD MILITARY SHOW
Sellindge Showground, Ashford, Kent
(07759 283833,

Forge Mill Needle Museum
RUBICON LEISURE
1940s WEEKEND
SAT 10 & SUN 11 MAY
10am - 4pm
See www.forgemill.org.uk for more details
Needle Mill Lane, Riverside,
Redditch, Worcs, B98 8HY
T: 01527 62509
FORGE MILL NEEDLE MUSEUM

HELSTON RAILWAY
Back to the 40s
24th, 25th & 26th May 2025
All Living History, Home Front & Reenactment Groups
Sign up and Join us
Helston Railway
1944
W D
TRUTHALL HALT
GWR


Apedale Valley Light Railway

Full Steam for Forces

2-3 August 2025

Interested eventers and stalls: apply to events@avlr.org.uk

Apedale Valley Light Railway, Loomer Road, Chesterton,
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 7LB
www.AVLR.org.uk

PAPPLEWICK PUMPING STATION

1940s WEEKEND

Step back in time to 1939-45

October 18th/19th, 10am-4pm

Military and civilian 1940s displays, re-enactors and stalls, displays of vintage vehicles, live entertainment, James Watt beam engines, Linby winding engine and miniature railway all in steam, real ale tent, plus underground reservoir tours.

Annual Pass with every full priced admission!

Tickets:
https://pps_1940s_steamevent.eventbrite.co.uk
www.papplewickpumpingstation.org.uk
Rigg Lane, Ravenshead NG15 9AJ

Charity No. 1097618

folkestoneandashfordmilitaryshow.co.uk)

07-08 SOUTHWICK REVIVAL "SPIRIT OF D-DAY" SOUTHWICK VILLAGE, FAREHAM, HAMPSHIRE

(southwickrevival.co.uk)

13-15 BACK TO THE 40s

Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, Wirksworth, Derbyshire
(01629 823076, e-v-r.com)

14 WHEELFEST25 & 1940s ROPERGATE

Pontefract Town Centre, West Yorkshire
(facebook.com/events/1079076736945805)

14-15 1940s WEEKEND

Keith & Dufftown Railway, Dufftown, Banffshire
(01340 821181, facebook.com/KeithDufftownRailwayAssociation/events)

14-15 STEP BACK TO THE 1940s

Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster, Worcestershire
(01562 757900, svr.co.uk)

14-15 THE ROMNEY MARSH WARTIME WEEKEND

Romney Marsh Wartime Collection, Romney Marsh, Kent
(01797 344747, rmwcollection.co.uk)

14-15 THE DIG FOR VICTORY SHOW 2025

North Somerset Showground, Wraxall, Bristol
(01275 873107, digforvictoryshow.com)

14-15 LOTHERTON HALL 1940s WEEKEND

Lotherton Hall, Aberford, Leeds
(0113 376 0318, facebook.com/events/lotherton-hall/lotherton-hall-1940s-weekend/460370907053358)

14-15 VINTAGE AND VICTORY WEEKEND AT THE FARM

Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire
(01625 374400, tattonpark.org.uk)

14-15 WARTIME AND RATIONING WEEKEND

Epping Ongar Railway, Ongar, Essex
(01277 365200, eorailway.co.uk)

21-22 METHERINGHAM 1940s

Metheringham Airfield Visitor Centre, Metheringham, Lincoln, Lincolnshire
(07754 704779, bainbridgeevents.co.uk)

21 PAST TIMES

National Tramway Museum, Crich Tramway Village, nr Matlock, Derbyshire
(01773 854321, tramway.co.uk)

21 THE BLITZ – 1940s EVENT

Staffordshire Regiment Museum, DMS, Whittington, Lichfield, Staffordshire
(01543 434394, staffordshireregimentmuseum.com)

21-22 DUXFORD SUMMER AIR SHOW

IWM Duxford, Duxford, Cambridgeshire
(020 7416 5000, iwm.org.uk/airshows/duxford-summer-air-show)

21-22 1940s REVIVAL WEEKEND

Promenade Park, Maldon, Essex
(07900 506785, thebestbar-none.com/event-details/1940s-revival-weekend)

21-22 HEVER'S HOME FRONT 2025

Hever Castle & Gardens, Edenbridge, Kent
(01732 865224, hevercastle.co.uk)

21-22 CROWLAND AND THORNEY 1940s WEEKEND

Park Farm, Thorney, Peterborough
(crowlandbuffalo.wordpress.com/1940sweekend)

21-22 DAMHOUSE 1940s WEEKEND
Damhouse Astley, Manchester (facebook.com/events/s/damhouse-1940s-weekend/1098257138618345)

21-22 WARTIME IN THE VALE – ASHDOWN WW2 CAMP
Ashdown Farm, Evesham, Worcestershire (07899 025091, ashdowncamp.com)

27-29 SPRINGWELL VILLAGE 1940s WEEKEND
Springwell Village, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear (0191 416 2630, svcv.co.uk)

27-29 TANKFEST 2025
The Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset (01929 405096, tankmuseum.org)

28 ARMED FORCES DAY
Jet Age Museum, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (01452 260078, jetagemuseum.org)

28 ARMED FORCES DAY
Rushden Transport Museum & Railway, Rushden, Northamptonshire (0300 3023 150, rhts.co.uk)

28 ARMED FORCES DAY
We'll Meet Again Museum, Boston, Lincolnshire (01205 761082, wma-ww2museum.co.uk)

28-29 BATTLE OF BRITAIN AIR SHOW
Headcorn Aerodrome, Ashford, Kent (0845 652 6263, headcornevents.co.uk)

28-29 1940s WEEKEND (CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF BRIEF ENCOUNTER)
Carnforth Heritage Centre, Carnforth, Lancashire (https://www.facebook.com/events/1996671150781275)

28-29 PADIHAM ON PARADE
Padiham, Lancashire (padihamonparade.org.uk)

JULY

04-06 CAPEL MILITARY SHOW
Aldhurst Farm, Capel, Dorking, Surrey (capelmilitaryshow.com)

04-06 INGLETON 1940s WEEKEND
Main Street, Ingleton, North Yorkshire (07834 552224, ingleton40s.co.uk)

05 SOUNDS OF THE 40s IN THE GARDENS
Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire (01780 752451, burghley.co.uk)

05-06 1940s WEEKEND
Peak Rail, Matlock, Derbyshire (01629 818022, peakrail.co.uk)

05-06 1940s WEEKEND
South Devon Railway, Buckfastleigh, Devon (01364 644370, southdevonrailway.co.uk)

05-06 BOTTISHAM AT WAR
Bottisham Airfield Museum, Bottisham, Cambridgeshire (01223 813952, facebook.com/events/608224984998643)

05-06 THORPE CAMP 1940s WEEKEND
Thorpe Camp Visitor Centre, Tattershall Thorpe, Lincoln, Lincolnshire (07396 228655, thorpecamp.wixsite.com/1940sweekend)

05-06 WAY BACK WHEN: 1940s WEEKEND
Ushaw Historic House, Chapels

THE HELICOPTER MUSEUM
IN ASSOCIATION WITH ssafa the Armed Forces charity
MILITARY HISTORY WEEKEND 2025
SAT 26TH & SUN 27TH APRIL
WWW.HELIMUSEUM.COM
01934-635227
BS24 8PP
LIVE TANK FIRING BOTH DAYS !!
LIVE 1940'S MUSIC BOTH DAYS !!
FALKLANDS CONFLICT DISPLAYS
STEP BACK IN TIME AT THE WWII ENCAMPMENT
BRITISH AND GERMAN HISTORIC WEAPON DEMONSTRATIONS BOTH DAYS !!

BRESSINGHAM
WWW.BRESSINGHAM.CO.UK
1940s Day
Sunday 11th May 2025
Bressingham Steam Museum celebrates the 80th VE day anniversary
For more information visit www.bressingham.co.uk

& Gardens, Durham City, County Durham
(0191 373 8500, ushaw.org)

11-13 1940s WOODHALL COUNTRY FESTIVAL

Woodhall & Glen Lodge Country Park, Woodhall Spa, Linclonshire
(01526 353710, facebook.com/woodhallcountrypark/events)

12 WALLOP WHEELS AND WINGS 2025

Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop, Stockbridge, Hampshire
(01264 781086, armyflying.com)

12-13 1940s WEEKEND

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, West Midlands
(0121 557 9643, bclm.co.uk)

12-13 VINTAGE FOR VICTORY

Whitchurch Library Gardens, Cardiff
(vintageforvictory.co.uk)

13 1940s DAY

New Hall Mill, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham
(07448 844972, newhallmill.org.uk)

19-20 1940s WEEKEND

We'll Meet Again Museum, Boston, Lincolnshire
(01205 761082, wma-ww2museum.co.uk)

19-20 RAILS TO VICTORY

Statfold Country Park, Tamworth, Staffordshire
(01827 830389, facebook.com/StatfoldRailsToVictory)

19-20 CLIPSTONE AT WAR

Clipstone Headstocks, Clipstone, Nottinghamshire
(01623 655522, clipstoneheadstocks.com)

19-20 SOUTHERN AT WAR

Bluebell Railway, Horsted Keynes Station, Horsted Keynes, Haywards Heath, West Sussex
(01825 720800, bluebell-railway.com/special/southern-at-war)

19-24 VINTAGE WEEK

North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham, Norfolk
(01263 820800, nnrailway.co.uk)

25-27 BOUGHTON HOUSE VINTAGE FESTIVAL

Boughton House, Kettering, Northamptonshire
(boughtonhousevintagefestival.co.uk)

26-27 OLD BUCKENHAM AIRSHOW

Old Buckenham Airfield, Old Buckenham, Attleborough, Norfolk
(oldbuckenhamairshow.co.uk)

26-27 THE SUFFOLK MILITARY SHOW

Trinity Park, Ipswich, Suffolk
(07907 594307, suffolkmilitaryshow.co.uk)

26-27 WE WILL MEET AGAIN

Betteshanger Park, Deal, Kent
(07540 374683, thehill112.com)

26-27 1940s WEEKEND

Aln Valley Railway, Alnwick, Northumberland
(facebook.com/events/1129190398658632)

26-27 THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY WORLD WAR 2 SHOW

Warminster Lake Pleasure Grounds, Warminster, Wiltshire
(07919 888111, rblww2.littleboxoffice.com)

VINTAGE EVENT

7TH JUNE 2025
11 AM -5.30PM

Get your programme in advance at the Town Council offices... or buy one on the day...

V.E. DAY

A NEWPORT PAGNELL VINTAGE EVENT

The whole town celebrating, vintage stalls, living history museum, craft hall, miniature steam engines, singers, dancers, indoor & outdoor displays, live band, vintage vehicles and a fashion show.

NEWPORT PAGNELL

See more details of the event at
www.newport-pagnell.org.uk

To book a stall phone
Mandy Voyde on 01908 618756
email web@newport-pagnell.org.uk

Organised parking available at Riverside Meadows £4 for the day

AUGUST

01-03 OPERATION MARKET HARBOROUGH

Market Harborough Showground, Market Harborough, Leicestershire (operation-market-harborough.co.uk)

02 EAST KIRKBY AIRSHOW

The Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby Airfield, Nr Spilsby, Lincolnshire (01790 763207, lincsaviation.co.uk)

02-03 FULL STEAM FOR FORCES

Apedale Valley Light Railway, Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire (0845 094 1953, avlr.org.uk)

02-03 1940s WEEKEND

Mid-Norfolk Railway, Dereham, Norfolk (01362 851723, midnorfolkrailway.co.uk)

02-03 BATTLE OF BRITAIN WEEKEND

We'll Meet Again Museum, Boston, Lincolnshire (01205 761082, wma-ww2museum.co.uk)

02-03 MORECAMBE 1940s REVIVAL

Poulton, Morecambe, Lancashire (07988 574129, m40srev.weebly.com)

08-10 RETROFESTIVAL

Newbury Showground, Thatcham, Berkshire (retrofestival.co.uk)

08-10 YORKSHIRE WARTIME EXPERIENCE

Willows Farm, Kirkhouse Green, Doncaster (yorkshirewartime.com)

09-10 SALUTE TO THE 40s WEEKEND

International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln, Lincolnshire (01522 514755, internationalbcc.co.uk)

09-10 SOUNDS OF THE 40S IN THE GARDENS

Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire (01780 752451, burghley.co.uk)

15-17 WHITE HORSE MILITARY SHOW

Neston Park Estate, Melksham, Wiltshire (whms.org.uk)

16 1940s HANGAR DANCE

Norfolk Tank Museum, Forncett St Peter, Norwich, Norfolk (01508 532650, norfolktankmuseum.co.uk)

16-17 ARMOURFEST

Norfolk Tank Museum, Forncett St Peter, Norwich, Norfolk (01508 532650, norfolktankmuseum.co.uk)

16-17 LYTHAM 1940s WARTIME WEEKEND 2024

Lytham Green, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire (01253 658443, discoverfylde.co.uk/lytham1940s)

16-17 REMEMBERING THE 1940s

Chasewater Light Railway and Museum, Brownhills, Staffordshire (01543 452623, chasewaterrailway.co.uk)

16-17 RAMSEY 1940s WEEKEND

The Camp, Wood Lane, Ramsey, Huntingdon (01487 814181, ramsey1940s.co.uk)

16-17 RAF HARROWBEER 1940s WEEKEND

Buckland Monachorum,

THE TROLLEYBUS MUSEUM at Sandtoft

The world's largest collection of preserved trolleybuses

1940's Weekend Saturday-Monday 19-21 April with something for all the family!

Trolleybus rides
Exhibitions
1950's Prefab
Toy Museum
Shop
Cafe
Picnic areas
Narrow-gauge railway

Belton Road, Sandtoft, Doncaster DN8 5SX
Web: www.sandtoft.org Facebook: trolleybusmuseum
Email: trolleybusmuseum@sandtoft.org

Issue 1 4d
Peak Rail Echo
8TH MAY 1945

GERMANY SURRENDERS

Peak Rail 1940's Event
5TH & 6TH JULY 2025
PEAK RAIL, ROWSLEY SOUTH STATION, HARRISON WAY, DE4 2LF

Take a journey down memory lane as this event gives you a unique opportunity to experience life during World War II and how both the military and civilians survived and adapted to war.

- Vintage Trade Stands
- Vehicle Displays
- Food & Drink
- Live Music
- Battle Re-enactments
- and much more!

ITS ALL OVER IN THE WEST!

Peace

Allied troops move into Germany

TICKETS
Site Entry
Adult/Senior: £5
Train Fare
Adult £15
Senior £10
Kids Go Free!
(When accompanied by a fare paying adult/senior)

PEAK RAIL
MORE INFORMATION & TICKETS AT PEAKRAIL.CO.UK

LLANDUDNO TRANSPORT FESTIVAL
BODAFON FIELDS
Llandudno, North Wales LL30 1BW. Mayday Bank Holiday Weekend
3rd, 4th & 5th May 2025. Gates open 9am
1000+ exhibits to include Lorries, Buses, Tractors, Motorbikes, Cars, Stationary Engines, Auto Jumble, Trade Stands and Much More.
Email: info@llantransfest.co.uk
www.llantransfest.co.uk
LLANDUDNO TRANSPORT FESTIVAL cannot be held responsible for any cancellations of the advertised events

Yelverton, Devon (rafharrowbeer1940s.com)

22-25 TWINWOOD FESTIVAL 2025

Twinwood Arena, Clapham, Bedford, Bedfordshire (01234 824773, twinwoodevents.com)

23-24 1940s WEEKEND

Telford Steam Railway, Telford, Shropshire (telfordsteamrailway.co.uk)

23-25 MILITARY ODYSSEY

Kent Showground, Detling, Maidstone, Kent (military-odyssey.com)

29-31 THE VICTORY SHOW

Foxlands Farm, Cosby, Leicester, Leicestershire (07711 430472, thevictoryshow.co.uk)

30-31 VINTAGE WEEKEND & RAF AT WAR WEEKEND

We'll Meet Again Museum, Boston, Lincolnshire (01205 761082, wma-ww2museum.co.uk)

SEPTEMBER

06-07 BATTLE OF BRITAIN AIR SHOW

IWM Duxford, Duxford, Cambridgeshire (020 7416 5000, iwm.org.uk/airshows/duxford-battle-of-britain-airshow)

06-07 1940s WEEKEND

Milton Keynes Museum, Wolverton, Milton Keynes (01908 316222, miltonkeynesmuseum.org.uk)

06-07 1940s WEEKEND

Avro Heritage Museum, Woodford Aerodrome, Stockport, Cheshire (01625 877534, avroheritagemuseum.co.uk)

12-14 THE GOODWOOD REVIVAL

Goodwood Racecourse, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 755055, goodwood.com)

13 DESBOROUGH 1940S DAY

Desborough, Northampton (01536 628816, desboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk/desborough-1940s-day)

13-14 HERITAGE WEEKEND

Lincolnshire Wolds Railway, Ludborough, Grimsby, Lincolnshire (01507 363881, lincolnshirewoldsrailway.co.uk)

19-21 LEE VICTORY FESTIVAL

Lee-on-the-Solent, Gosport, Hampshire (07710 107231, facebook.com/LeeVictoryFestival)

19-21 SHERINGHAM 1940s WEEKEND

Sheringham, Weybourne and Holt, Norfolk (experiencesheringham.com/activities-and-events/1940s-weekend)

20-21 STEAM BACK TO THE FORTIES

North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham, Norfolk (01263 820800, nnrailway.co.uk)

Hever's Home Front

20-21 1940s WEEKEND

West Somerset Railway, Minehead, Somerset (01643 704996, west-somerset-railway.co.uk)

20-21 HOME FARM, HOME FRONT

Beamish Museum, Beamish, Stanley, County Durham (0191 370 4000, beamish.org.uk)

20-21 SALUTE TO THE 40s

The Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent (01634 823800, thedockyard.co.uk)

20-21 SYWELL CLASSIC – PISTONS & PROPS

Sywell Aerodrome, Sywell, Northampton, Northamptonshire (01775 768661, sywellclassic.co.uk)

20-21 GRASSINGTON 1940s WEEKEND

The Square, Grassington, Skipton, North Yorkshire (grassington1940sweekend.co.uk)

26-28 WELSHPOOL 1940s WEEKEND

Welshpool, Powys (07782 166342, welshpool1940sweekend.co.uk)

OCTOBER

04-05 BATTLES THROUGH HISTORY

South of England Showground, Ardingly, Haywards Heath, West Sussex (01798 343344, battlesthroughhistory.co.uk)

04-05 WALLINGFORD – BACK TO THE FORTIES

Cholsey & Wallingford Railway, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (backtotheforties.co.uk)

04-05 ON THE HOME FRONT 1940s WEEKEND

Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire (01527 831363, avoncroft.org.uk)

04-05 HARRY'S 40s DAY

Barnby Dun & Kirk Sandall Cricket Ground, Doncaster, South Yorkshire (facebook.com/people/Harrys-40s-Day/61551951247145)

06 1940s DAY

Dogdyke Pumping Station, Tattershall, Lincolnshire (01522 683755, dogdyke.com)

11-12 A VICTORY HARVEST – 1940s WEEKEND

Kent Life, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent (01622 763936, kentlife.org.uk)

11-12 BACK TO THE 1940s

Eden Camp Modern History Museum, Malton, North Yorkshire (01653 697777, edencamp.co.uk)

18-19 1940s WEEKEND

Papplewick Pumping Station, Ravenshead, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire (0115 963 2938, papplewickpumpingstation.org.uk)

DECEMBER

13-14 FESTIVE FORTIES CHRISTMAS WEEKEND

National Emergency Services Museum, Sheffield, South Yorkshire (0114 2491 999, visitnesm.org.uk)

•Details correct at time of press – please confirm with event organisers before travelling.

Amendments to this list are published throughout the year. To inform us of an event not already included, please email info@bestofbritishmag.co.uk or write to the address on page 4.

Round the AUCTION HOUSES

Every week at auction houses up and down the country, a varied host of collectables are put up for sale at general and specialist events, offering everything from top-end treasures to more modest items. **David Brown** picks a selection of recent gems that have found new homes, and looks ahead to forthcoming sales.

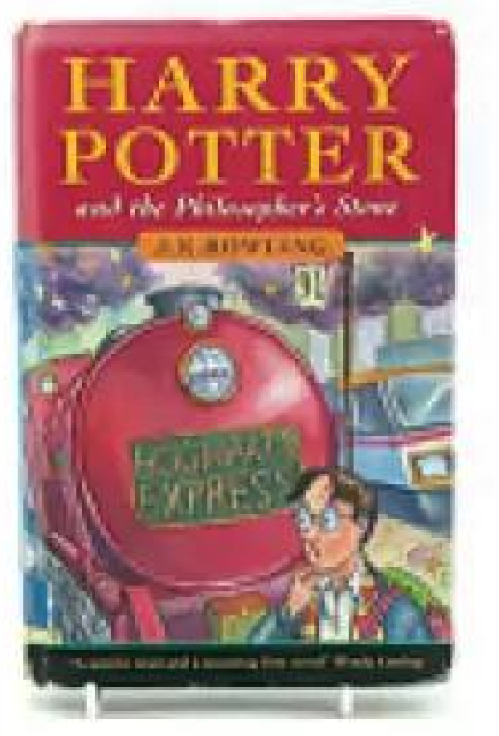
LOT 599 Vectis Auctions – Star Wars Spectacular, 28 January (vectis.co.uk)

The late January Star Wars Spectacular from Vectis featured an assortment of carded, loose and boxed figures, creatures, vehicles and ship models, raising a total amount of £156,000. One highlight, a pre-production prototype rare Ben Obi Wan figure represented a collector's dream. It was complete with a double-telescoping lightsaber and is marked with "K" and "27" by the original Kenner engineering department. In excellent condition, the figure has a full, signed certificate of authentication. The bids started on commission at £17,000, eventually selling to an internet bidder.

SOLD FOR £24,500

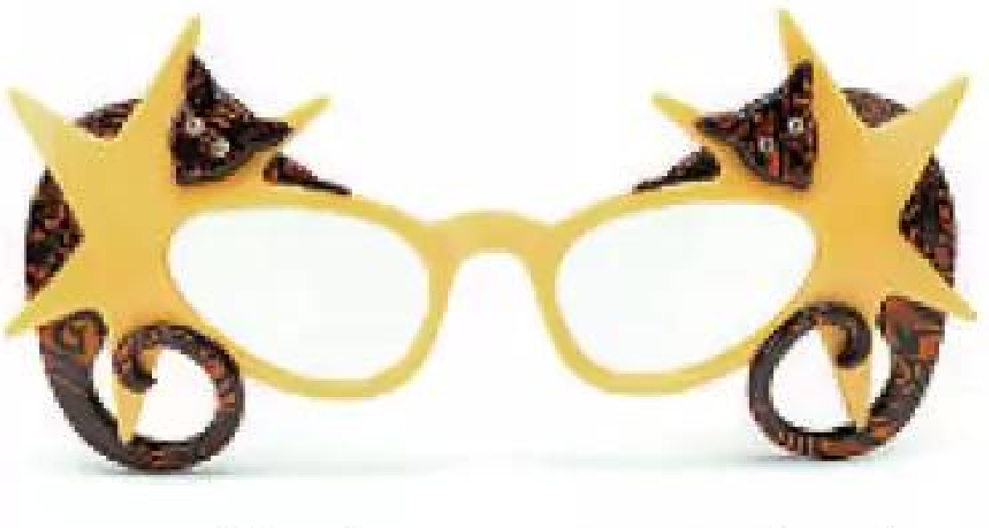
LOT 411A NLB Auctions – The Winter Live Sale, 8 February (nlbauctions.co.uk)

A rare copy of the first edition of JK Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone created a stir among collectors from around the world when it appeared at a Devon auction. There were just 500 hardback books printed initially in 1997, of which around 300 were issued to schools and libraries. The copy offered was one of the library copies in the publisher's original laminated boards. This rarity was discovered by Daniel Pearce, who runs the auction, among the effects of a deceased man from Brixham and was destined for the tip. Daniel recognised the potential of the book when he noted several signs on the first edition, including the misspelling of Philosopher's on the rear cover with the second "o" omitted. The following lot, 411B, a first edition, first impression paperback copy of the same book reached a hammer price of £1,300.



SOLD FOR £18,000

LOT 24 Christie's – Barry Humpries: The Personal Collection, 13 February (christies.com)



Another month, and another spectacular pair of celebrity glasses makes big money. Among the trademark stylish glasses worn by Dame Edna Everage, the top price was paid for a pair of yellow, lacquered possum spectacles produced by Anglo American Eyewear. The pre-sale estimate was £1,000-1,500, which proved to be very modest. The Dame Edna artefacts, including lavish stage dresses, artwork etc was just one popular aspect of the Christie's sale Barry Humphries: The Personal Collection that amassed an overall price of £4,627,224. Dame Edna was one of the most endearing comic characters created by Humphries (1934-2023) whose impressive art collection comprised works by Australian artists, plus examples from the likes of Aubrey Beardsley. A painting by English-born artist Charles Conder, Sand dunes, Ambleteuse, made £239,000, while a drawing by Sir Edward Burne-Jones reached just under £200,000 against its estimate of £30,000-50,000. A first edition of Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest sold for £138,000, while a copy of The Picture of Dorian Grey sold for more than £50,000, doubling its estimate price.

SOLD FOR £37,800

LOT 110 Crewe Railwayana Auctions – Online Auction, 21-23 February (ukrailwayana.com)

There was a time when railwayana items from diesel and electric locomotives were seen as less valuable than items from their steam predecessors, but times have changed. BR's powerful class of 22 Deltic locomotives had a legendary following and any items associated with them attract a premium. Making its debut at auction, the double-liner chromed brass nameplate The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (pictured with auctioneer Neil Booth) from D9005/55005 had been with one owner for 45 years when it appeared in CRA's February online sale and was always going to be sought after and now represents a record-breaker for a classic traction nameplate. The Type 5 diesel-electric locomotive entered service at Gateshead depot in May 1961 as D9005. It was named at York station on 8 October 1963 by Brigadier GH Cree, colonel of the regiment. It was renumbered as 55005 in February 1974. The nameplates were removed when the locomotive was withdrawn in February 1981. A worksplate from "Baby Deltic" D5900 sold for £4,000. Lots are currently being accepted for the next CRA sale to be held on 9-11 May.

SOLD FOR £35,100

COMING UP

LOTS TBA Anglia Car Auctions – Classic Cars, 5-6 April (angliacarauctions.co.uk)

Included in the vehicles currently listed for ACA's next Classic Cars sale in early April is a 998cc Austin Mini Moke, registered in June 1967, ideal for someone looking for some motoring fun who doesn't mind too much about our changeable weather. The vendor has owned it for 22 years and it has 93,489 miles on the clock. While its last MoT expired in June 2019, as a historic vehicle, the Moke is currently MoT-exempt. Included with the Moke is plenty of paperwork including current and past V5Cs, MoT certificates back to 1986, some invoices and a driver's handbook supplement. The pre-sale estimate is £10,000-12,000. Further classic vehicles are currently being added to this sale.

When you are placing your bid(s) please be sure about what you are bidding for. Remember to take into account that on top of the hammer price, you will have to pay a buyer's premium (usually with VAT payable on the premium). Also, allow for post and packing with remote bidding.

POSTCARD FROM SUSSEX

Fortified by a homemade cheese sandwich, **Bob Barton** rekindles a childhood passion for walking old railway tracks and discovers a maze and a dragon

When I was 13, I started walking along disused railway lines for a reason that now escapes me. Armed with an Ordnance Survey map and a cheese sandwich, a school chum, Ken Scott, and I would set off to trek abandoned lines. Our inexperience at these urban adventures, I recall, revealed itself when we mistakenly entered a field with an aggressive bull. On another occasion, we found ourselves on the tracks of a working train depot, having to sidestep live electric rails and shunting trains. Not to be recommended.

Older and wiser, I still make occasional forays along paths forged by closed branch lines. It's a great way to, ahem, get off the beaten track. Recently, I walked sections of two lines in Sussex still fondly remembered for their quirky character. Both were engineered by a gentleman who gained a reputation for running "light railways" on a shoestring. Colonel Holman Fred Stephens (1868-1931) was an eccentric lifelong bachelor who devoted himself to two things: controlling these diminutive trains and active duty in the Territorial Army.

The first railway I investigated went from the medieval Cinque Port of Rye to Camber Sands – a seaside beauty spot known to generations of holidaymakers. The Rye and Camber Tramway closed to passengers as long ago as 1939 but I was still able to trace much of its route to the sea. First, I crossed the River Rother, admiring colourful trawlers and scallopers moored at a quayside, complete with fish market. My trek took me over misty marshland (from where a large heron took flight) and, later, expanses of sand dunes.

To my surprise, I found a long section of the 3ft-gauge track still in place – on a golf course. Apparently, the Admiralty concreted a road along this part during World War Two. The still-shiny rails remain in situ along the middle. They led me to a corrugated iron building and concrete platform. This was Golf Links station; the structure has been adapted for storage purposes but is still recognisable. I imagined Edwardian golfers clambering out of wooden carriages here, to tee off without further

THE SANTA MARIA

Top: The Mermaid Inn, one of East Sussex's oldest pubs (rebuilt in 1420), is a rambling place of heavy oak timbers, just off one of Rye's cobbled streets. Left: Rye was home to Captain Pugwash creator John Ryan and a ship decorating a house, the Santa Maria, is reminiscent of Pugwash's vessel, the Black Pig.

Photographs: Bob Barton

Left: Golf Links station has been adapted for storage purposes but is still recognisable and retains the platform and rails of the Rye and Camber Tramway. Right: The formidable 13th century Ypres Tower now contains a museum full of relics from those days at Rye.

ado. A large sign gives a potted history of the route and identified this as the "old tramway permissive footpath".

A fellow walker told me that steam locomotives were abandoned in the 1920s, when it became more economical to use a petrol "tractor" resembling an overgrown lawnmower. Continuing through the duneland, I exchanged hellos with two female golfers – there were no other players in sight. I enjoyed a homemade cheese sandwich on a convenient bench (Ken Scott would be proud of me), before looking at the sands. They were deserted, too, thanks to the chilly weather. After a pint of Romney Marsh Sunset ruby ale at a pub in Camber, I caught a bus back to Rye on its hilltop.

I found it most atmospheric strolling the town's cobbled streets that are lined with old buildings. Pirates and smugglers – part of life here in past centuries – are still here, in spirit. Fortifications against French raids include a formidable 13th century castle, Ypres Tower, now containing a museum full of relics from those days (01797 226728, ryemuseum.co.uk).

The Mermaid Inn, one of the county's oldest pubs (rebuilt in 1420), is a rambling place of heavy oak timbers. Swords and pikes hang somewhat menacingly from the walls. I sat in a wooden chair that creaked and sighed like an old schooner, in the aptly named Giant's Fireplace Bar. The spacious inglenook (it takes up a whole wall) had a log fire blazing heartily. "It can take a while to get going in the morning," said the barmaid. In the corner is a narrow door she said gives access to a secret passage. Apparently, the notorious Hawkhurst smuggling gang held court here in the 1700s, "carousing and smoking pipes, their pistols lying on the table".

Before leaving Rye, I wanted to pay tribute to one of the many artists who lived here. John Ryan (1921-2009) was creator of Captain Pugwash – the jolly pirate who graced books and television screens in the 1950s and 60s. Ryan lived in Norman House, just around the corner from the Mermaid. As a child, I used to imagine I was Tom, the cabin boy in the five-minute animated adventures. A ship decorating another house, the Santa Maria, was reminiscent of Pugwash's vessel, the Black Pig. It was touching to see a plaque adorning a bench near the station that commemorates Ryan. It calls him a much-loved resident and benefactor.

I travelled from East to West Sussex for my second railway themed walk. Chichester was the starting point for a line with a name to conjure with: The Hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway. Colonel Stephens opened it in 1897. My first stop, though, was the Novium Museum (01243 775888, thenovium.org.uk), a splendid introduction to the city. It houses the preserved foundations of a Roman bath house: this was an important Roman settlement. Upstairs, social history exhibits include several artefacts relating to the railway. (I also learned that Chichester was home to royal warrant holders Shippam's, whose potted fish paste graced sandwiches in Mother's picnic basket.)

Only short stretches of the railway can be walked today (it closed 90 years ago after all). Enthusiasts at the Manhood Wildlife & Heritage Group have devised an interesting walking trail I was able to follow towards the coast (mwhg.org.uk/tramway). It includes information boards near the former stations. I started by looking out for little paper train stickers that mark the route on lamp-posts. It reminded me of a paper chase and I half expected to catch up with a Scout affixing these secret waymarkers for a running event.

I learned that, apart from a variety of little steam locos, the line used Ford Model Ts crudely adapted into passenger trains to save money. Petrol was delivered in gallon cans and horse dung used to plug leaks in the radiators. The route took me on to the Chichester Ship Canal (01243 771363, chichestercanal.org.uk), which the railway once crossed on a lifting bridge that was compared to a castle drawbridge. It had to be hand-cranked before and after each train. The canal was eerily quiet; it seems sadly under-used by boats. A walker told me there are pleasure trips at certain times. I spied an egret enjoying the solitude.

Later, I channelled my inner centurion by walking part of the city's Roman wall. It was an unexpected highlight. It also gave me an appetite for some organic cake and a cuppa in St Martin's Coffee House, a restored town house dating from 1650. There's a bonus: "Please ask if you'd like to hear him [the owner] playing a Beethoven

Horsham is synonymous with gingerbread making, the cottage industry reaching a peak in the 1860s, and the town's museum displays carved wooden moulds.

HUNDRED OF MANHOOD AND SELSEY TRAMWAYS CO., LTD.
BICYCLE, Excess Luggage, or DOG. 6D.
BETWEEN CHICHESTER AND SELSEY. Single Fare 11D.
S. Ty. (W. Sx. R.) SELSEY to THIRD CLASS FARE
CHICHESTER TO SELSEY. Return Fare, 1/3
SELSEY TO CHICHESTER. Return Fare, 1/3

Left: A scaly dragon sculpture (by Hannah Holmes) graces the centre of an enjoyable hedge maze in Horsham Park. Right: Novium Museum gives a splendid introduction to the city of Chichester and social history exhibits include several artefacts relating to Hundred of Manhood and Selsey Tramway.

sonata or Chopin waltz with your coffee," said a sign by a piano.

I discovered another musical link in the cathedral (chichestercathedral.org.uk), where I sought out Gustav Holst's resting place. A chatty volunteer explained why the ashes of The Planets composer was buried there in 1934, rather than in his Cheltenham birthplace. Turns out Holst often performed there and was an admirer of one of the cathedral's organists, Tudor composer Thomas Weelkes.

I'm a fan of mazes and dragons, so imagine my excitement when I discovered both in the same place. A scaly dragon sculpture (by Hannah Holmes) graces the centre of an enjoyable hedge maze in Horsham Park. In Horsham Museum (01403 254959, horshammuseum.org) situated in the Causeway – a street of rainbow-coloured houses – I found another large dragon sculpture and several miniatures. The town's connection with these mythical creatures dates from a book written in 1614: True and Wonderful. It describes a "serpent" in nearby St Leonard's Forest that was killed by a 6th century hermit.

I also discovered that the town is synonymous with gingerbread making. This cottage industry reached a peak in the 1860s and the museum displays carved wooden moulds. They gave each baking a distinctive decoration. A volunteer explained that the industry died during World War One. It was revived a century later, using an original recipe, she said. It is sold in their shop, so I'm able to confirm Horsham gingerbread is delicious. I'll be ordering a top-up supply to keep me going when walking those old railway lines.

The Causeway in Horsham is a street of rainbow-coloured houses.

REFRESHMENTS

Rye Waterworks Micropub, Tower Street, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7AT (01797 224110, ryewaterworks.co.uk)
Quirky real ale and cider micropub in former waterworks and soup kitchen.

The Mermaid Inn, Mermaid Street, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7EY (01797 223065, mermaidinn.com)
Historic inn serving real ales and meals.

St Martin's Organic Coffee House, 3 St Martins Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1NP (01243 786715, organiccoffeehouse.co.uk)
Characterful place in a centuries-old building appropriately furnished.

WIRKSWORTH BACK TO THE 40S

13TH, 14TH, AND 15TH JUNE 2025

NORTH WESTERN
USA
COWBOY
B-8

- STEAM TRAIN RIDES
- LIVING HISTORY DISPLAYS
- VINTAGE STALLS
- 1940S ENTERTAINMENT
- VINTAGE STALLS
- BBMF FLYPAST (TBC)

VISIT
WWW.E-V-R.COM/1940S
FOR MORE INFO
AND ADVANCE TICKETS

That'll Be the Day

Peter Robertson chats to actor turned author Karl Howman

A popular actor since the early 1970s, thanks partly to sitcoms such as Brush Strokes and Mulberry, Karl Howman has recently become a documentary maker and bestselling author. But for all his success, Sussex-based Karl remains totally level-headed. He explains: "I could have bought a Rolls-Royce when things were going very well, but I didn't. I've lived in special locations but always had a modest house. My current home in a Cinque Port town is nice but it's nothing like 20 bedrooms and things like that because I don't need it. I don't need more than one car either. I've never been extravagant."

Born in Woolwich, south-east London, Karl was not from an acting or literary family. "As a six-year-old at school in Woolwich, I was cast as a tree in a play and had to sway when the wind blew. That was my introduction to acting," he smiles. "I was good at history and English, and had a wonderful English teacher called Mr Horner who suggested I audition for the National Youth Theatre."

In his year at the NYT was fellow future star Phil Davis, but Karl initially had other career plans. "I wanted to be an investigative journalist, which I've only got to do recently for my books. I'm a huge fan of good, honest journalism."

Some sources say that Karl trained to be a goalkeeper for Charlton Athletic, but he only took part in a short summer course in goalkeeping at the club. "No way was I on their books or anything like that," he explains, but has remained a lifelong fan of the Addicks.

As to his aims as an aspiring actor, Karl admits: "I hoped I'd meet a lot of girls, be able to pay for the odd round, and maybe have my own flat. At that time, it wasn't a vocation, it was just fun. And the more fun I had, the more I seemed to get parts. If I'd taken it more seriously, I'm not sure I'd still be doing it."

Karl's screen credits, starting in 1972, included The Canterbury Tales, Softly, Softly, and Thirty-Minute Theatre, but the big break took place over the next two years in the films That'll Be the Day and its sequel Stardust. He got to work with pop stars David Essex, Ringo Starr, Keith Moon, Billy Fury, Adam Faith, Marty Wilde, and Dave Edmunds.

"One day David Essex gave me a lift in a Land Rover and played a tape of his first hit single, Rock On, which had just got to No 1 in the US. That seemed unbelievable because we were so cocooned in making those movies," he says. "The producer David Puttnam asked Keith Moon to look after me. Keith was definitely 'out there'. I loved the fellah because he just didn't care and that appealed to the rebellious streak in me. Even after filming stopped, we'd meet whenever Keith was in London and go out on the town. When I heard he'd died [in 1978, aged 32], that really shook me."

Top: Having lived in special locations but always in a modest house, Karl's current home is in a Cinque Port town.

Photographs: (Main) Peter Robertson, (Brush Strokes) BBC 1996

STARDUST
DAVID ESSEX · ADAM FAITH
LARRY HAGMAN

Left: Karl, pictured with Mike Walling, is perhaps best-known for playing painter and decorator Jacko in the sitcom Brush Strokes. Right: Appearing in the films That'll Be the Day and Stardust, which tell the story of musician Jim MacLaine (David Essex, second left), Karl (centre) got on well with co-star Keith Moon (left). Below: Co-written with Donal MacIntyre, Karl's book A Million Ways to Stay on the Run was a Sunday Times bestseller and its audiobook narrated by Karl won a True Crime Award.

Did Karl fancy becoming a pop star himself? "No. Not at all. If I'd had the talent to do it I'd have done it," he says.

In 1976, Karl married his sweetheart Clare and they went on to have two daughters, so it was a blessing he popped up in a lot of TV shows that decade including The Sweeney, The Professionals, Van der Valk, Blake's 7, and the John Esmonde and Bob Larbey sitcom Get Some In!, taking over the role of National Serviceman Jakey Smith from Robert Lindsay in the final series.

From 1986 until 1991, Karl starred in another Esmonde and Larbey sitcom, Brush Strokes, although this one was written for him. "It was about a painter and decorator called Jacko who had an eye for the ladies. Jacko was a mirror to the eccentricities of the other characters, and the catalyst for everything that happened. That show was the turning point in my career, and I will be eternally grateful for the brilliant cast and lift it gave my career."

Then a household name, Karl played the lead in two subsequent sitcoms, Mulberry with Geraldine McEwan, and Babes in the Wood with Denise Van Outen. "Mulberry is my favourite of all. I loved every minute and had a great rapport with Geraldine – she was a joy to work with."

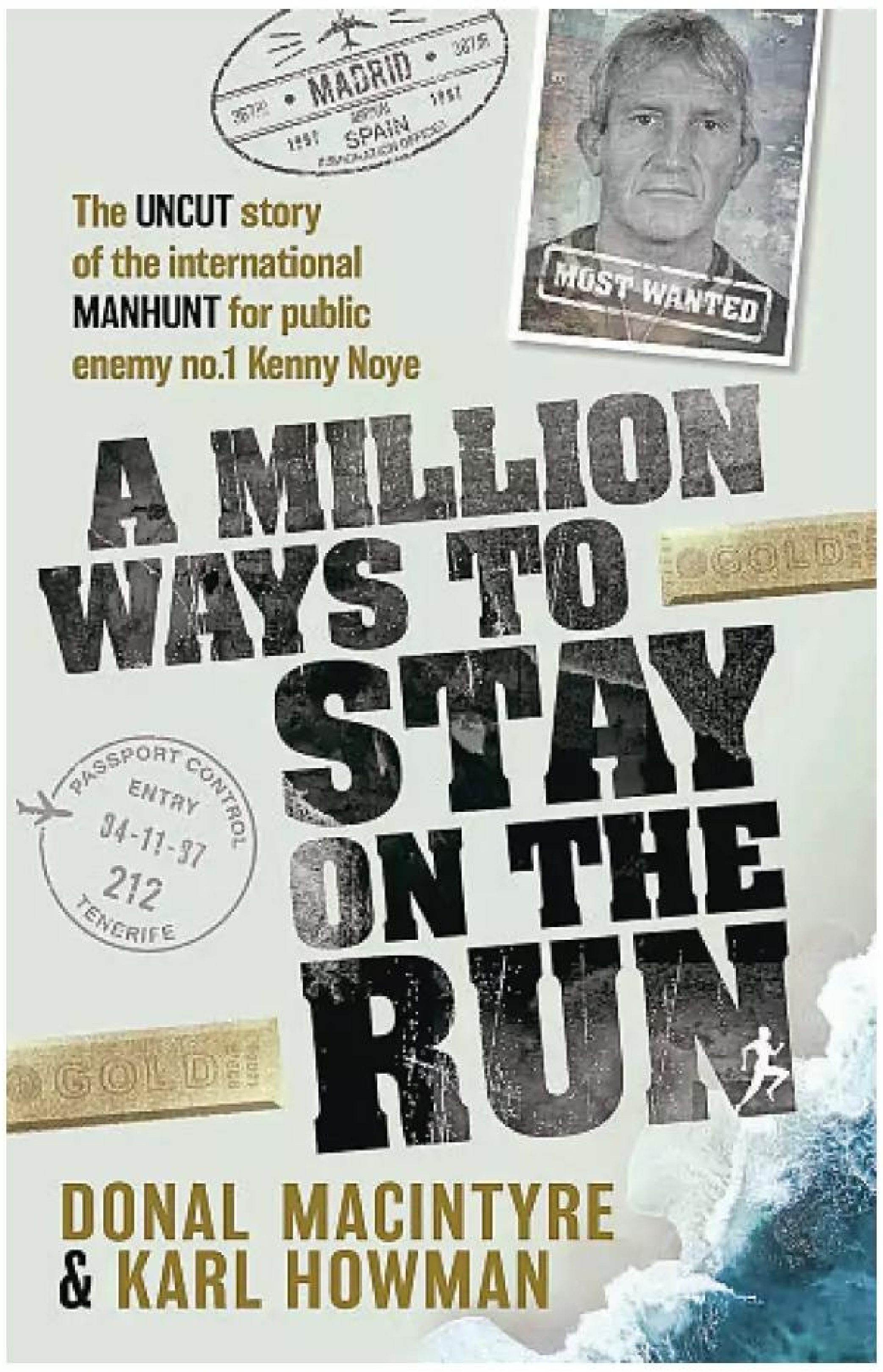
Karl also got to star in the West End show Me and My Girl for 15 months. He has appeared in more than 50 plays, starring in two by Barrie Keeffe at Stratford East – the first of which transferred to Mumbai – and a Russian play that was subsequently taken to the Edinburgh Festival. He was in the first UK tour of The Mousetrap, he has toured Australia twice, New Zealand once, and most of south-east Asia. On BBC Radio 4 over 10 years, Karl starred in comedy series King Street Junior and Coming Alive. He co-starred in the British cult movies Babylon (1980) and Party Party (1983) but never considered trying his luck in Hollywood. "I wasn't asked and find it ridiculous that I would be," he laughs.

From 2014 to 2016, Karl was in EastEnders as Buster Briggs, father of Danny Dyer's character Mick Carter. "I enjoyed working with Danny. He was very amenable and bang on his part and caring," says Karl. "Then I wasn't as fast at learning the script as I had been at his age, and he was very patient if I struggled a bit, bless him."

Karl hasn't acted since 2020, mainly because his collaborative writing projects took off. Secret Spitfires was published in 2022 following a documentary of that name he co-directed and co-produced. "Two days after I finished on EastEnders we were interviewing Dame Vera Lynn in her house for the documentary. She was then 98 and loved EastEnders. She even sang to me, and apparently that was the first time she'd sung in years."

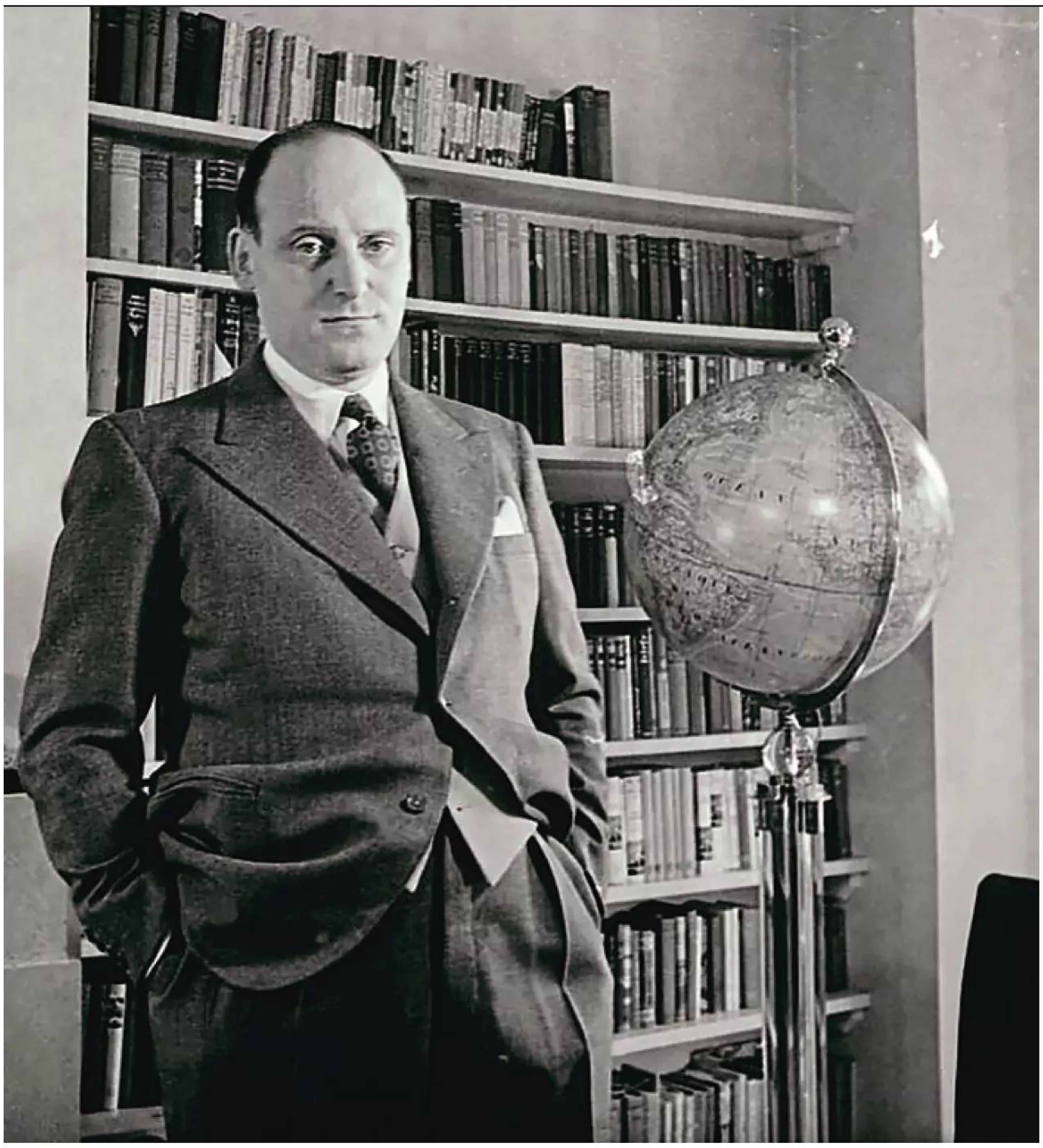
A Million Ways to Stay on the Run, chronicling the hunt for crime boss Kenneth Noye and co-authored with Donal MacIntyre, was a Sunday Times bestseller within two weeks of publication in 2023, and its audiobook narrated by Karl won a True Crime Award.

Karl admits he's finding writing immensely satisfying creatively. "That's because you're in control. There's nothing better than being in control. When you're being told where to stand and how they want it, for 50 years which is how long I acted for, it's satisfying to sit at your desk, write what you want, see something take shape, and not be told it's got to be done now. I've never felt happier, to be honest."


MADRID
SPAIN
The UNCUT story of the international MANHUNT for public enemy no.1 Kenny Noye
MOST WANTED
A MILLION WAYS TO STAY ON THE RUN
GOLD
PASSPORT CONTROL
ENTRY
04-11-97
212
TENERIFE
GOLD
DONAL MACINTYRE
& KARL HOWMAN

Now in his 72nd year and approaching his golden wedding anniversary, Karl is devoted to his family which now includes six grandchildren. Already working on a new project which is currently under wraps, he writes and researches every morning before taking the dogs for a walk through Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Modest to the last, he says of his successful professional and personal life: "I think I've made a reasonable fist of it and managed to bring a family up with the help of my wonderful wife. I don't think I've ever been a star, but I'm pretty happy with the way it's gone so far."



The Master Craftsman

Martin Handley profiles a virtuoso of the red herring

Francis Durbridge will always be remembered as the author who introduced fictional crime writer and sometime private detective Paul Temple to UK audiences. However, this was just one creation in Francis's canon of characters and many strings would be added to the Durbridge bow in a career spanning more than 50 years. In fact, with his work featuring on radio, television, the stage, film and the printed page, Francis qualifies as a pioneer of multimedia entertainment.

Born in Hull on 25 November 1912, Francis was educated at Bradford Grammar School, where a teacher encouraged his early literary interests. He moved on to university at Birmingham, graduating in 1933, whereupon he became a clerk in a stockbroking office. This did not last long, for while still a student, Francis had written a radio play entitled Promotion. He was successful in selling it to the BBC in 1934. The plot concerned life in a department store and was based on the one where his father worked. Reaction to its broadcast was favourable and the BBC expressed interest in further offerings from this promising new writer.

Francis based himself in the Midlands, and while returning to Birmingham from London by train one day, he noticed the man seated opposite was reading an Arnold Bennett title. Conversation ensued and from this came a suggestion that Francis should read W Somerset Maugham's First Person Singular. He did so the same night and the character Paul Temple soon formed in his mind. Francis then approached a leading light at BBC Midland Region, Martyn C Webster, to ascertain possible interest if he created stories based around the character.

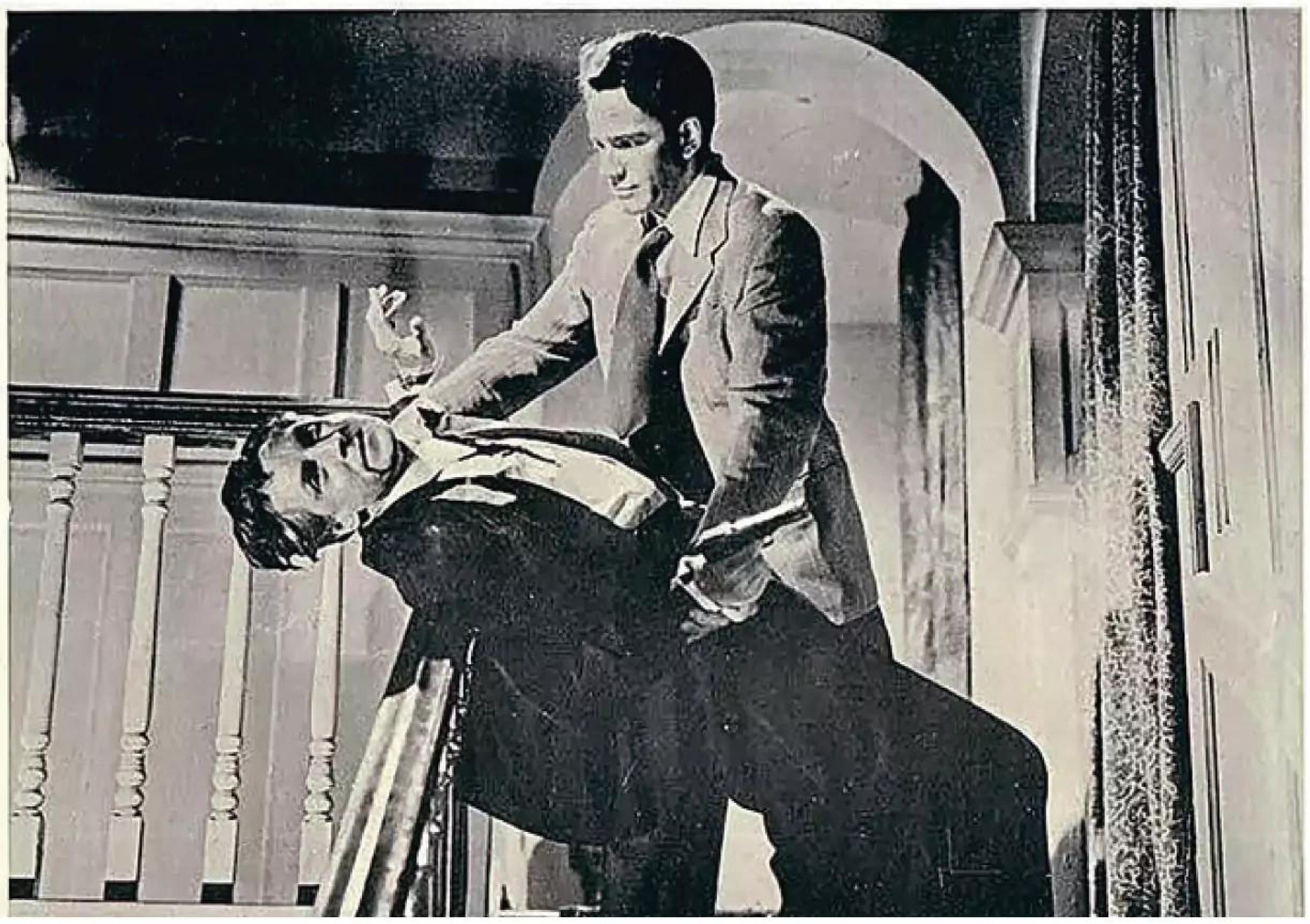
Top: Paul Temple creator Francis Durbridge, pictured in 1949, saw his work featured on radio, television, the stage, film and the printed page.

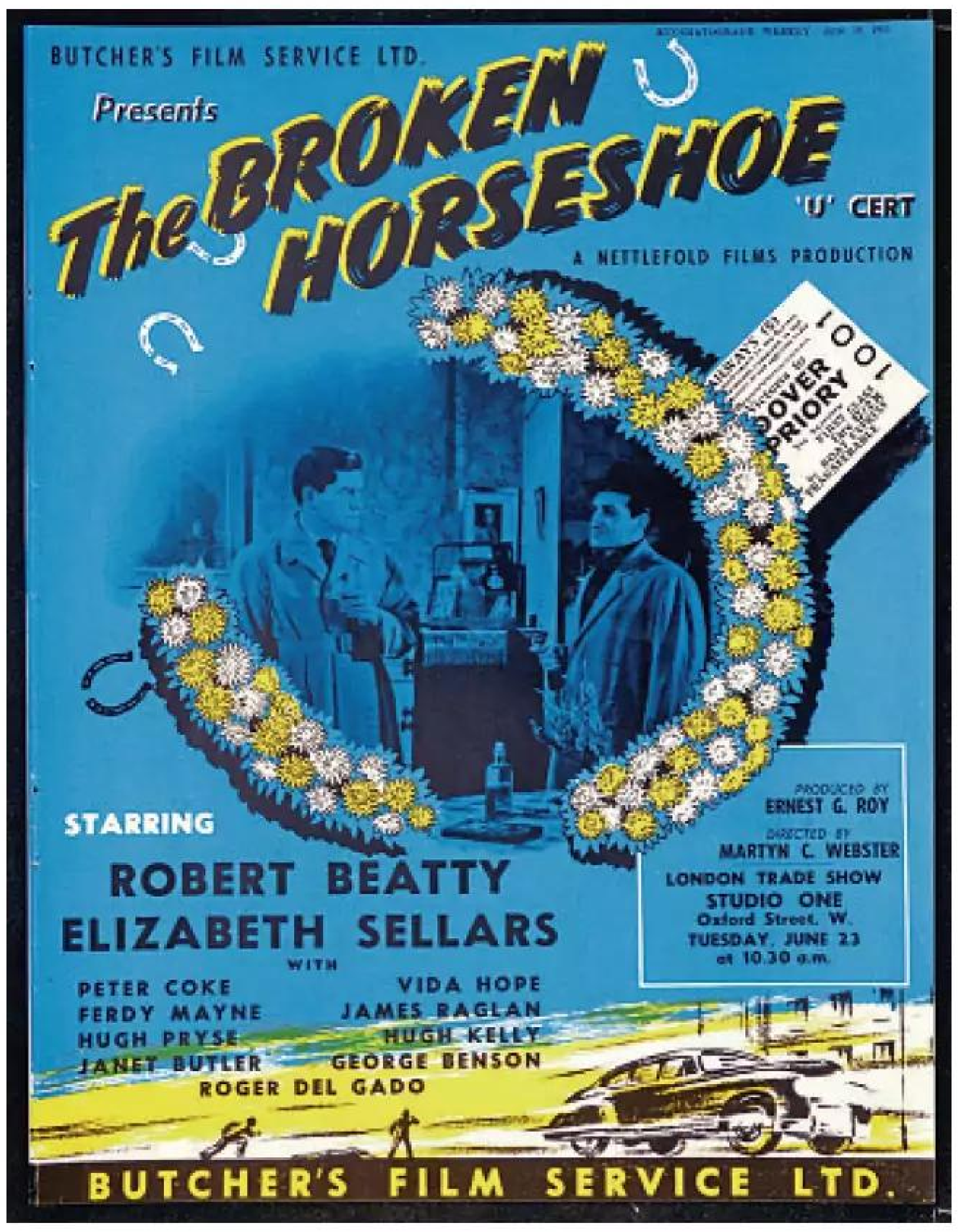
Webster was supportive and from 8 April 1938, for an eight-week run, Send for Paul Temple hit the airwaves. Temple was given a female accomplice, affectionately named "Steve". Her real name was Louise but Steve Trent was her pen name for her day job as a Fleet Street journalist. Again, this mirrored real life, for Durbridge's fiancee (and soon to be wife) Norah Lawley followed that same career path. He and Norah would have two sons following their 1940 marriage.

Send for Paul Temple became a radio sensation and the BBC received up to 7,000 letters after the serial ended, begging them to repeat it. In time, they did but the die was cast for as many Paul Temple tales as Francis Durbridge could turn out. They offered escapism, being frequently set in upper middle-class circles and featuring intricate plots. Temple was initially played by Hugh Morton, with Steve being voiced by Bernadette Hodgson. A third regular character was Scotland Yard's Sir Graham Forbes.

In due course, Temple would be portrayed by Carl Bernard, Barry Morse, Howard Marion-Crawford (later to play Dr Watson to Ronald Howard's Sherlock Holmes) and Peter Coke (1954 onwards). Marjorie Westbury assumed the Steve role from 1945 until the final radio series in 1968. The theme tune was Vivian Ellis's emotive and descriptive Coronation Scot. The depiction of a speeding train became instantly recognisable – and still is today. In all, 20 radio serials were broadcast featuring Paul Temple before film rights were sought and agreements reached.

Send for Paul Temple was released to cinemas in 1946, but the definitive characterisations were reserved for the ensuing three releases. Calling Paul Temple (1948), Paul Temple's Triumph (1950) and Paul Temple Returns (1952) showcased John




BUTCHER'S FILM SERVICE LTD.
Presents
The BROKEN HORSESHOE
'U' CERT
A NETTLEFOLD FILMS PRODUCTION
DOVER PRIORY
1001
STARRING
ROBERT BEATTY
ELIZABETH SELLARS
WITH
PETER COKE
FERDY MAYNE
HUGH PRYSE
JANET BUTLER
VIDA HOPE
JAMES RAGLAN
HUGH KELLY
GEORGE BENSON
ROGER DEL GADO
PRODUCED BY ERNEST G. ROY
DIRECTED BY MARTYN C. WEBSTER
LONDON TRADE SHOW
STUDIO ONE
Oxford Street, W.
TUESDAY, JUNE 23
at 10.30 a.m.
BUTCHER'S FILM SERVICE LTD.

Left: The 1948 film Calling Paul Temple showcased John Bentley in the title role with Dinah Sheridan as female accomplice "Steve Trent", a pen name for her journalist day job. Right: The first thriller serial to be shown on BBC television, horse-doping tale The Broken Horseshoe was later made into a film version starring Robert Beatty. Below: The many plays written by Francis Durbridge, which remain staples of repertory theatre, include Suddenly at Home.

Photograph: (Francis Durbridge) © National Portrait Gallery, London

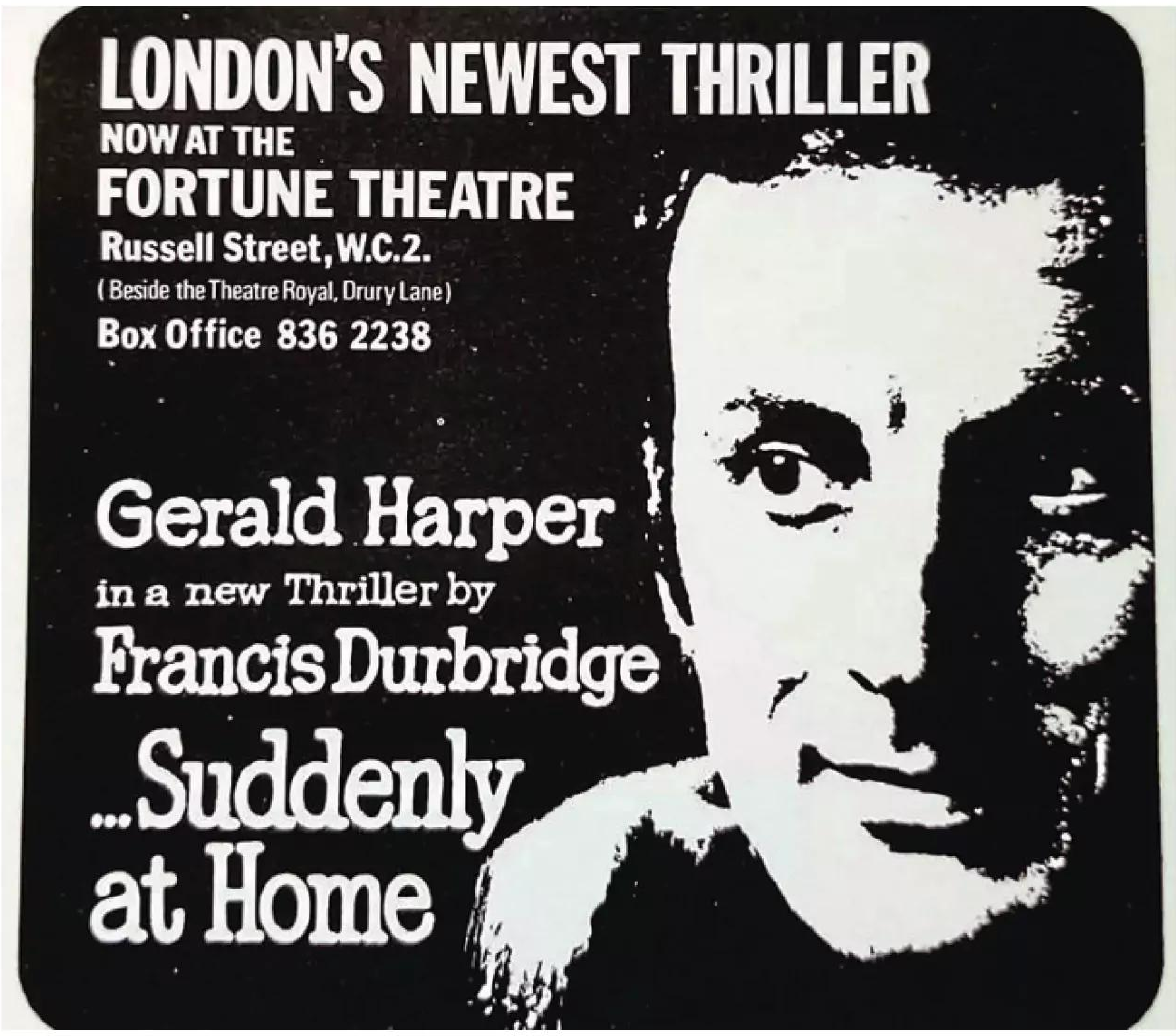
Bentley in the title role with Dinah Sheridan as Steve. They were filmed at Walton Studios (previously Hepworth Studios and Nettlefold Studios) at Walton-on-Thames, Surrey. The films still resonate today and can be found regularly on Talking Pictures TV.

The character made his TV debut in 1969, with 52 50-minute episodes broadcast over four seasons until 1971. The best-known Paul Temple on TV was undoubtedly suave Francis Matthews, who made the part his own. His Steve was Ros Drinkwater, an actress who later went into photojournalism and became a smallholding farmer in County Monaghan, Ireland. Sadly, only 16 of these episodes have survived.

> **"Francis Durbridge was a pioneer of multimedia entertainment."**

Many of Paul Temple's escapades were transcribed into novels, but Francis Durbridge took on a co-author for these, as he saw himself primarily as a creator of dialogue. So enamoured did Durbridge become of his creation that he co-wrote two novels with Douglas Rutherford as being authored by Paul Temple. These were The Tyler Mystery (1957) and East of Algiers (1959). A Paul Temple newspaper pictorial script ran in the London Evening News for 20 years between 1951 and 1971. The stories were drawn by John McNamara.

Beyond Paul Temple, Francis Durbridge wrote 17 serials for the BBC between 1952 and 1980. These were broadcast under the banners A Francis Durbridge Serial and, later, Francis Durbridge Presents. Across 1960/61, the BBC also broadcast three Durbridge tales as The World of Tim Frazer, which generated 18 episodes in all. Jack Hedley portrayed Tim Frazer. These broadcasts achieved 80% of the available TV audience on their first showing. The Francis Durbridge Presents items can be found on DVD today and feature The Doll, Melissa, Bat Out of Hell (featuring John Thaw and Sylvia Syms) and The Teckman Biography among others.



LONDON'S NEWEST THRILLER
NOW AT THE
FORTUNE THEATRE
Russell Street, W.C.2.
(Beside the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane)
Box Office 836 2238

Gerald Harper
in a new Thriller by
Francis Durbridge
...Suddenly at Home

Francis's horse-doping tale The Broken Horseshoe (1952) was the first thriller serial to be shown on BBC television. It was broadcast live from Alexandra Palace and never recorded, though a later film version with Robert Beatty is still aired occasionally. He also starred in Francis's Portrait of Alison (1956).

Durbridge often based his plots on the premise that "...everyone is lying. Nothing is what you think it is." He never relied upon excessive violence, preferring to leave his radio audience clamouring for next week's episode by introducing a small shock at the end of each one, eschewing the usual gunfight conclusion. All Francis's output was popular in Europe and in 1967 he was approached to create a work specifically for the continental audience. This became La Boutique and 15 countries bought the rights to broadcast it.

For all the successes outlined above, Francis Durbridge's first love was the stage – where his supreme talents for plot and dialogue found their metier. As a young man, he visited London and Birmingham theatres regularly, studying the play he had just seen in depth afterwards. His own first production ran at Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham from 25 October-6 November 1943. It was a transcription of Send for Paul Temple. Many others would follow and remain staples of repertory theatre to this day. These include Suddenly at Home, the title being taken from The Times' obituary column. It ran for 700 performances at London's Fortune Theatre from June 1971 until June 1973. The Gentle Hook (1974), Murder With Love (1976), House Guest (1981), Deadly Nightcap (1986), A Touch of Danger (1988), The Small Hours (1991), Sweet Revenge (1993) and the posthumously produced Fatal Encounter (written 1995, but published 2005) have kept London and provincial audiences spellbound as the twisting plots unfold. Leading stars of stage and screen were invariably cast in the West End productions.

Francis considered his output to be not so much "who done it" but more "will he/she get away with it". He died at his Barnes home on 11 April 1998, aged 85. His own obituary in The Times spoke of him as "...a virtuoso of the red herring and unexpected plot twist. He could turn a victim into a villain (and back again) in less time than it took an old wireless to warm up." The Daily Telegraph described him simply as "... the master craftsman".

A Nice Class of Corpse

Russell Cook investigates how Simon Brett went from radio producer to writer of detective fiction

In 1975, 30-year-old BBC Radio producer Simon Brett published his first novel – Cast, In Order of Disappearance. It features Charles Paris as an often out-of-work actor with a liking for a warming glass of Bell's whisky at every available opportunity. Simon Brett delivers a fun and cosy mystery highlighting the highs and lows of the actor's life, especially when investigating the crimes of murder and blackmail in a series of often compromising and humorous situations. The reluctant detective becomes the reluctant hero. For the next few years, he wrote several Charles Paris mysteries and, by 1985, Simon – who had moved from BBC Radio, after discovering Douglas Adams and commissioning The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, to become a producer at London Weekend Television – realised he could earn as good a living writing full time. He gave up the day job.

Soon, Charles Paris had a rival alongside him on the bookshelves. In 1986, A Nice Class of Corpse was published featuring Mrs Pargeter, a widow in her late 60s who has a selection of very dubious but loyal friends all connected with her late husband's shadowy business interests of which we can only guess. All these friends that Mrs Pargeter gets in touch with when confronted with a new mystery to solve are to be found listed in a little black book left to her by her husband. She guards it with infinite care making sure it never falls into the hands of the police.

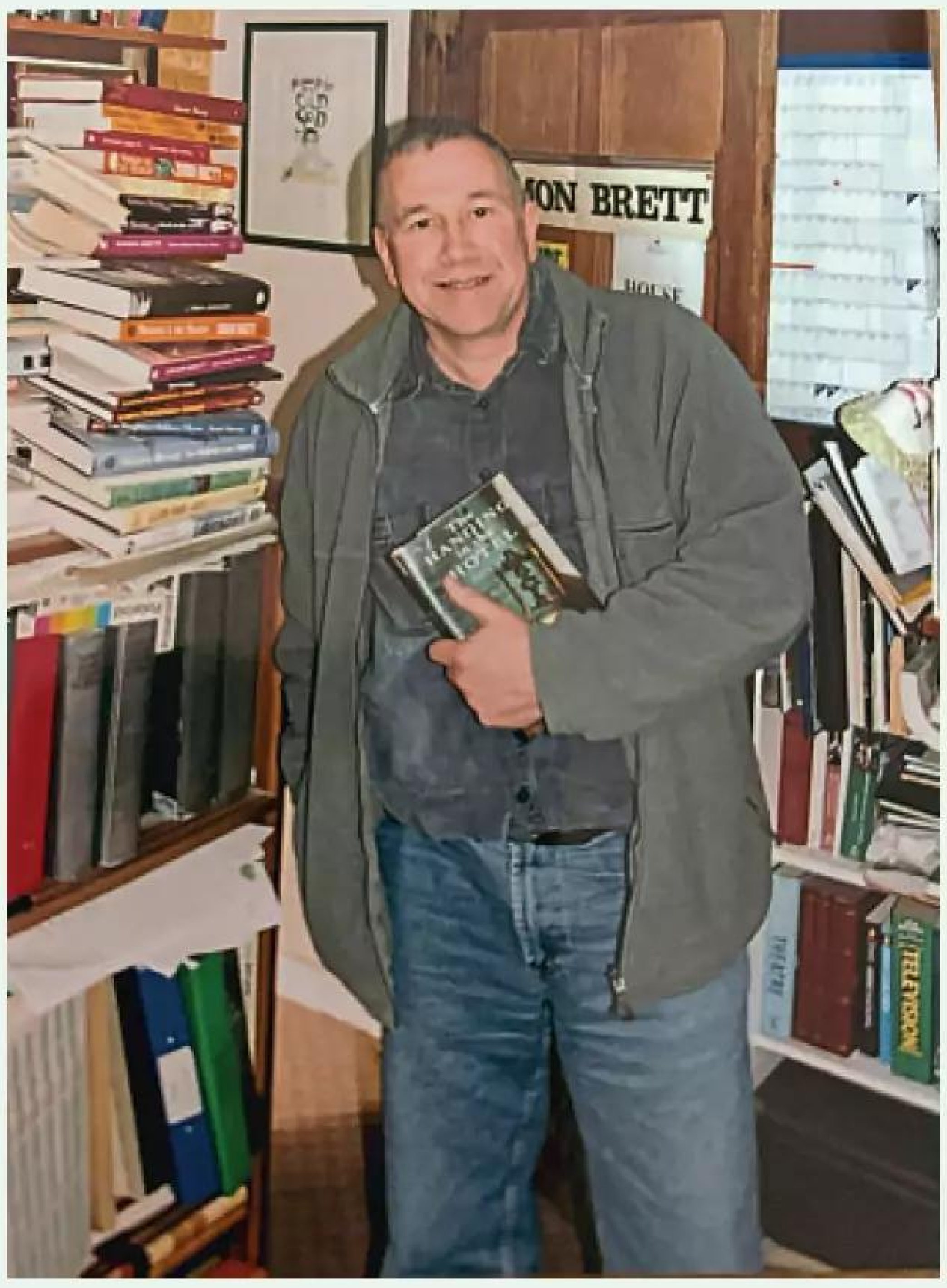
Both the characters of Charles Paris and Melita Pargeter hark back to a golden age of detective fiction. The hard-drinking actor holding his glass of Bell's could easily step into the smoke-filled world of a Raymond Chandler novel while the sly and impeccably mannered widow could happily live in the Agatha Christie universe. A Miss Marple who has crossed over to the dark side.

Over the years, Charles Paris and Mrs Pargeter continued to delight readers with their unique crime-solving abilities as their tales hit the bookshops across the land. As they did so, their creator branched out into the worlds of playwriting, also compiling humorous collections of anecdotes, most notably the Frank Muir Goes Into... compilations which stretched to several volumes. Instant bestsellers included the trio of Little Sod books, the first of which was made into a successful BBC television series which starred Rik Mayall as the voice of the baby diarist taking his first steps into the world. Add to these successes, the radio series After Henry, which also transferred to television, plus theatre plays, pantomimes and standalone novels and you have a CV that justifies giving up that day job.

With Charles Paris and Melita Pargeter continuing to solve crimes on a regular basis, in 2000 two new sleuths made their debut in arguably Simon Brett's most successful ongoing series, A Fethering Mystery book series. At the last count, 20 tales set in the delightful Sussex countryside have been released. Debuting in The Body on the Beach, neighbours Jude and Carole become embroiled in a whodunnit that cements the beginnings of a cautious friendship between them.

Carole, an uptight ex-civil servant who has taken early retirement to the quaint and quiet coastal village of Fethering, spends her days deciding which will be the best walk to take her dog Gulliver on.

A very ordered and quiet life takes a turn for the slightly more interesting when the cottage next door becomes occupied by Jude, who is the opposite of the strait-laced and very ordered Mrs Sneddon. Jude, known initially by her first name only, is a crazy bundle of long flowing dresses, bangles, beads and new



Left: Former BBC Radio and London Weekend Television producer turned author of more than 100 books, Simon Brett, pictured in 2004.

age living energy. In true cosy mystery style, let the crime solving begin.

Murders in museums, torsos in cellars, deaths under hairdryers and even a break from the Sussex countryside with the discovery of a body in a Turkish tomb. What makes these lighthearted and fun tales stand out from an Agatha Christie mystery is the character development over the series of books. With each new mystery, Brett sprinkles elements of the past of the two sleuths into the narrative which never detracts from any of the crime-solving tales. We even learn Jude's second name. A lot of the humour in these page-turners is derived from the sparky and sometimes combative relationship between the amateur crime solvers, two people who over time really begin to cherish each other's friendship.

In recent times, Simon Brett has returned to the worlds of Mrs Pargeter and Charles Paris. After a break of 18 years, the hard-drinking actor is back in the aptly titled A Decent Interval. The apparently ageless Charles now comes face-to-face with reality television, even has a mobile phone and that welcoming glass of Bell's whisky is never far away. His adventures have also been dramatised for radio, a medium that Simon Brett is remarkably familiar with and a format that suits the character of the struggling actor down to the ground, especially as he is brought to life in a laconic and laid-back way by Bill Nighy.

Since 2009, another crime-busting duo has been delighting mystery fans, stories with an obvious nod to the worlds of PG Wodehouse and EF Benson (author of the Mapp and Lucia books). Blotto and Twinks. Step forward the terribly handsome and intelligent lite Right Hon Devereux Lyminster, known as Blotto, and his gifted highly intelligent sister Lady Honoria Lyminster, known as Twinks. Clever and amusing adventures returning to, and celebrating, the golden age of mysteries set in the 1920s in the oft-parodied world of the clueless. A sense of joy shines throughout these tales. Blotto has a chauffeur called Corky Froggett. You cannot go wrong with a name like that. The author is having fun.

In recent years, Simon has begun another series. Ever up with current trends, the Decluttering Mysteries feature ace tidy-upper Ellen Curtis, dead bodies and murder. Death can indeed be untidy. Simon Brett is now the author of more than 100 books. Add to this the plays, radio comedy and drama, and it is an output to be admired and applauded. I once asked Simon about his thoughts on writing and his plans.

> **“The author of more than 100 books, Simon's output is to be admired and applauded.”**

Without hesitation, he said: “I remember once a few years ago having one of those conversations about reaching a certain stage in life and the ‘Oh, I'd like to take a year off to find the source of the Nile or sail around the world.’ I found myself saying that I would take a year off to do some more writing, just to play with ideas and having the time to do so. I'm a fairly obsessive writer. If I stopped being published, I'd still do it. I enjoy it so much.”

It looks as if the futures of Charles Paris, Mrs Pargeter, Carole and Jude, Ellen Curtis, Twinks and her brother Blotto are assured. I sense there are many more mysteries waiting to be solved courtesy of Simon Brett. 🇬🇧

SIMON BRETT
A Shock to the System
SIMON BRETT
CHARLES PARIS IN...
CAST IN ORDER OF DISAPPEARANCE
SIMON BRETT
CHARLES PARIS IN...
SO MUCH BLOOD
SIMON BRETT
CHARLES PARIS IN...
STAR
Simon BRETT
WHAT BLOODY MAN IS THAT?
A CHARLES PARIS THEATRICAL MYSTERY
BRETT
Dead Romantic
Simon BRETT
DEAD GIVEAWAY
A CHARLES PARIS THEATRICAL MYSTERY
Simon Brett
How to be a Little Sod
How to be a Little Sod. Book 1
SIMON BRETT
A NICE CLASS OF CORPSE
SIMON BRETT
Mrs, PRESUMED DEAD
Mrs Pargeter's POUND OF FLESH

Right: Just some of the books penned by Simon Brett, including those featuring the characters of Charles Paris and Mrs Pargeter.

Breaking the Mould

Jan Johnstone charts the history of "William Harbutt's wonder clay"

Who, of a certain age, doesn't remember back in the day the thrill of receiving a 1lb box of Harbutt's Plasticine for a birthday or Christmas present? The opening of the long rectangular package, the sliding out of the blocks of various coloured strips whose fate was, within weeks, to be incorporated in one large ball of indeterminate colour.

Plasticine, warmed in the hands, was and still is a versatile product. It can be used for making small models of people, perhaps for a doll's house; to construct bricks or whole buildings to line a road, perhaps running alongside a toy railway track; to mould flowers, animals, birds – indeed, anything a child's fertile imagination can conjure up.

When did this most adaptable of materials originate and who was the person who introduced it to generations of children? Born on 13 February 1844 in North Shields, in what is now Tyne and Wear, William Harbutt went on in later life to study at the National Art Training School, London eventually becoming an associate of the Royal College of Art. By 1874, he had moved to Bath, taking up the role of headmaster at Bath School of Art and Design, where he remained until 1877. By then married, his wife, Elizabeth Harbutt, was a well-known painter, skilled in miniature portraits with one of her customers being Queen Victoria.

By 1897, William was carrying out experiments and attempting to come up with a modelling clay that wouldn't dry out for use by his sculpture students. The natural clay they used was hard and difficult to work, also requiring a damp cloth to stop it drying out when left for any period of time. Before long, William had come up with a synthetic modelling paste, or Plasticine as it eventually became known. Sterile, non-toxic, also soft and malleable at first, William produced the product in his basement where he apparently used a garden roller to squeeze out excess water.

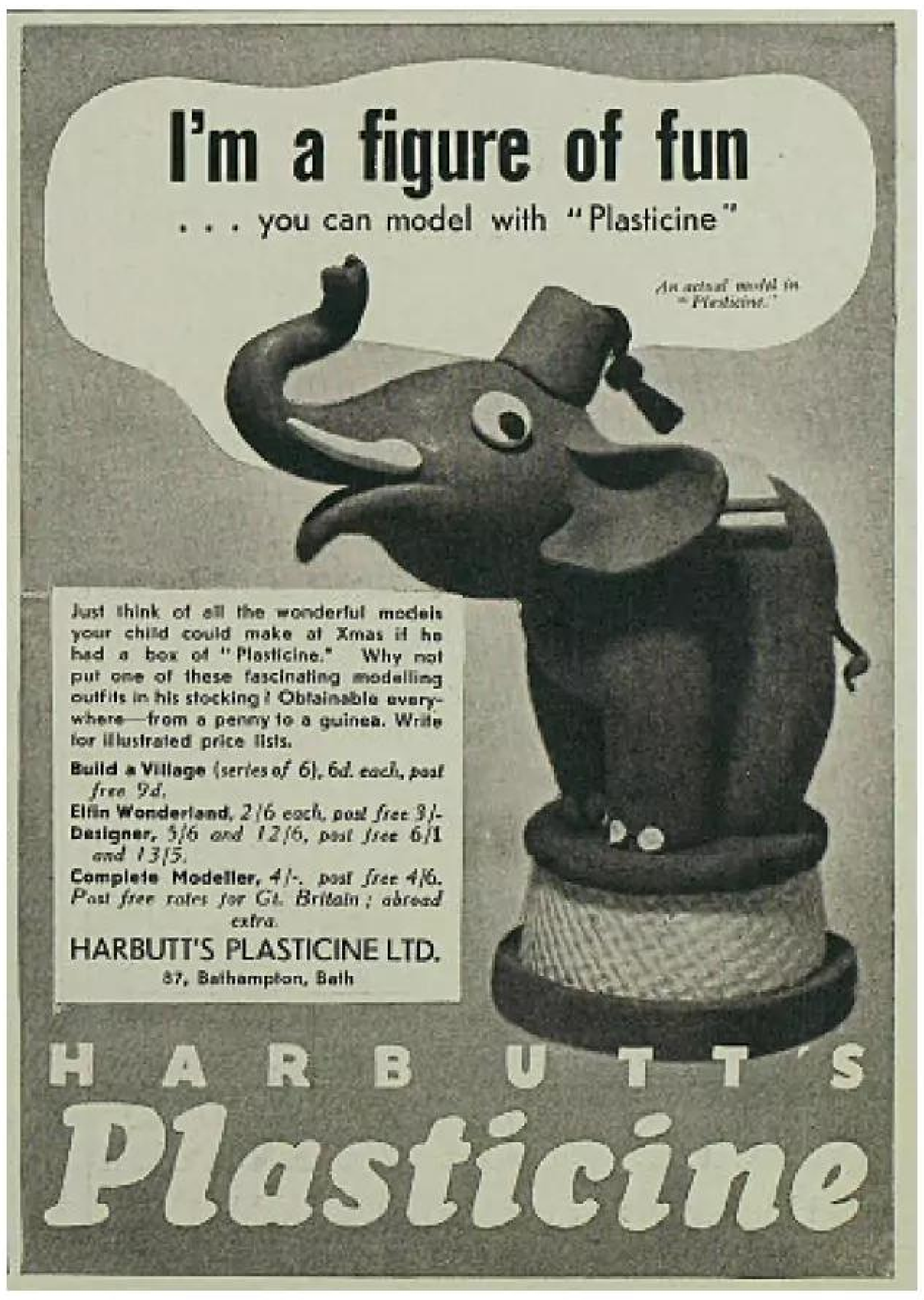
By now, demand was growing rapidly, and not only in Britain but also abroad. On being awarded a trademark two years later, he went on to open a factory in an old mill on the banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal at Bathampton. It's interesting to note that at this time the early packaging was illustrated by many of William and Elizabeth's artist friends who were only too happy to produce designs for the original boxes.

It was also at this time that William began travelling the country and encouraging customers to buy his product, particularly schools, explaining it allowed children to express themselves freely. As popularity boomed, people also began asking for his Plasticine in shops. Children particularly loved it as it could be used over and over again.

At first, Plasticine was a uniform grey but, in later years, as demand continued, colours were added to the mix with early advertisements advising Plasticine could now be purchased in five "rainbow" colours. In later years, the range was greatly expanded with up to 17 different shades available. It wasn't long before more than 50 countries were importing Harbutt's Plasticine, now a much in-demand product, not just as a child's plaything but also for artists who used

Top: Gromit, Norbot the gnome, and Wallace, the stars of Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl, which premiered on Christmas Day 2024 on BBC One.

Photographs: (Wallace & Gromit) Aardman Animations/Richard Davies, (Garden) Creative Commons/Cormac70



I'm a figure of fun

. . . you can model with "Plasticine"

An actual model in "Plasticine."

Just think of all the wonderful models your child could make at Xmas if he had a box of "Plasticine." Why not put one of these fascinating modelling outfits in his stocking! Obtainable everywhere—from a penny to a guinea. Write for illustrated price lists.

Build a Village *(series of 6), 6d. each, post free 9d.*
Elfin Wonderland, *2/6 each, post free 3/-*
Designer, *3/6 and 12/6, post free 6/1 and 13/5.*
Complete Modeller, *4/-. post free 4/6.*
Post free rates for Gt. Britain; abroad extra.

HARBUTT'S PLASTICINE LTD.
87, Bathampton, Bath

HARBUTT'S
Plasticine

The World Famous Modelling Material
NON TOXIC
'Plasticine'
Made only by HARBUTT'S PLASTICINE LIMITED

Left: An early advert for Harbutt's Plasticine, which was produced in a factory on the banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal at Bathampton, near Bath. Right: At first, Plasticine was a uniform grey but, in later years, colours were added to the mix.

it to create original models before they were cast in plaster or bronze.

In 1914, with the onset of World War One, William mixed wool fibre and antibacterial products into Plasticine, the idea being that it could be used as a sterile dressing for wounds. It was also at this time that the War Office used his product to make models of Zeebrugge and Vimy Ridge to plan future action. After the war, in 1919, Edwin Lutyens used it to create his original model of the Cenotaph before it was built in wood in Whitehall. Eventually, the Cenotaph was constructed permanently in Portland stone due to great demand by the public.

Sadly, on 1 June 1921, while on a trip to New York, William caught pneumonia and died. Brought home, he was buried in Bathampton. A plaque now marks the spot where he and his family once lived at The Grange, High Street, Bathampton.

During World War Two, Plasticine was extensively used by Air Raid Precautions for gas-proofing rooms, while Plasticine with shredded wool added proved to be useful to the army and navy as ear plugs, particularly during heavy gunfire. Bomb disposal teams found it was ideal when defusing German bombs, where it was used to prevent liquid oxygen, placed around the battery-powered fuze, escaping. When the liquid oxygen had reached its lowest temperature, it was considered safe to remove the fuze.

It was also in April 1939 that perhaps the most unusual item appeared – the Plasticine dartboard, sold as "superior to the old-fashioned cork, wood and fibre boards as it wouldn't split and there was no need to soak it".

In 1963, the old factory building in Bathampton was accidentally destroyed by fire due to a mistake made by a contractor. A more modern building replaced it and six of William and Bessie's seven children went on to work in the family business, right up until it finally closed for good in 1983. Throughout all that time, the formula for producing Plasticine had been kept secret but it is now known it was a combination of gypsum, petroleum jelly, lime, lanolin and stearic acid. After closure, production was moved to Thailand and today, in memory of where the Bathampton factory stood for 83 years, retirement apartments in the area are known as the Harbutts.

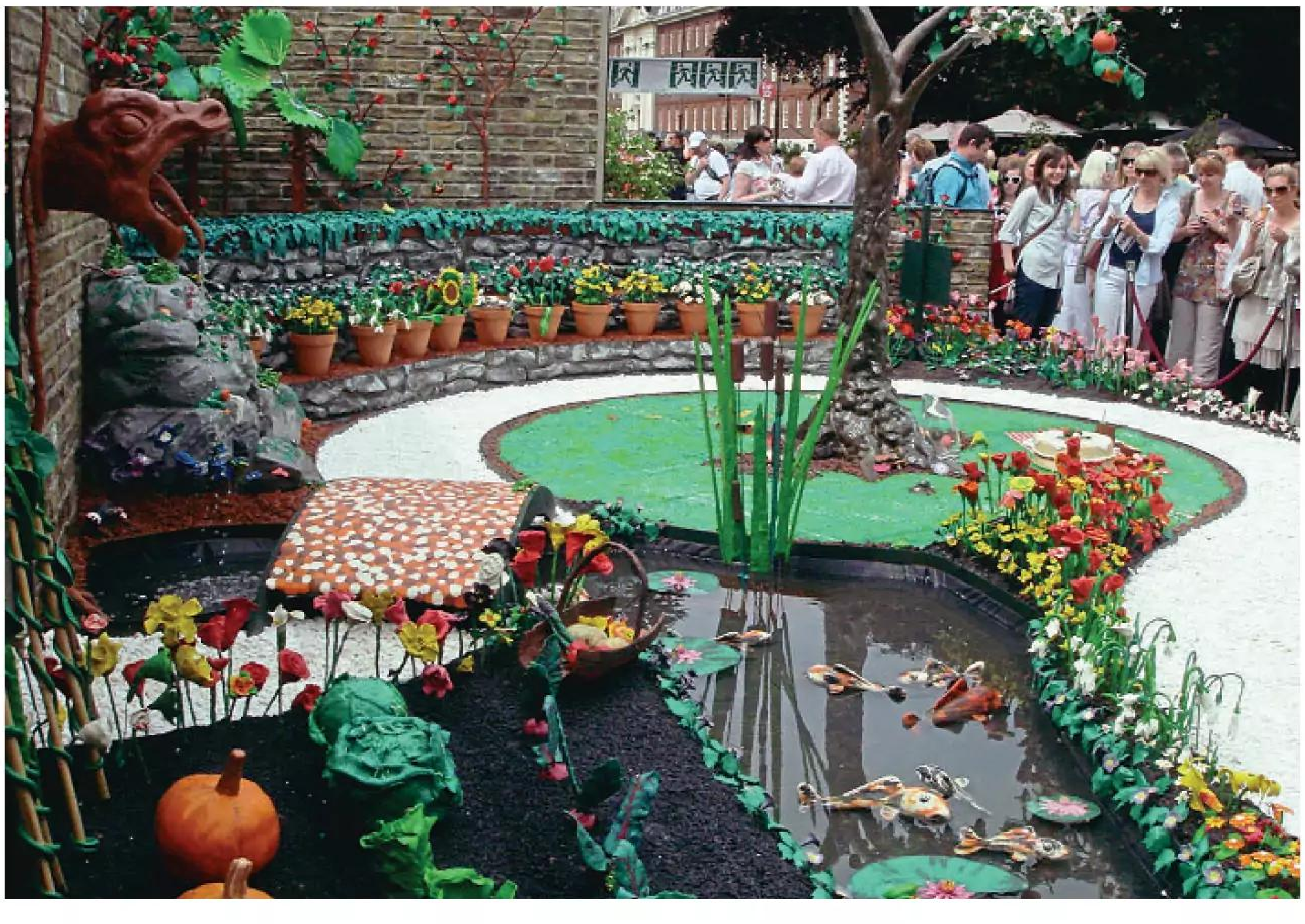
Now a generic term for modelling clay, Plasticine and its competitors' products are still being used today, particularly by animators. Possibly the first stop-motion character making an appearance was Morph, a little man who lived in a box on a table. Created by Aardman Animations, Morph appeared in the 1970s in programmes such as Take Hart hosted by Tony Hart. Other stop-motion productions by Aardman, which has been producing films since 1972, are Shaun the Sheep, and Wallace & Gromit.

Just over a year ago, there were fears that the Plasticine-type material used by Aardman could run out as Newclay Products, producers of Lewis Newplast, announced it was closing. Aardman quickly bought up all the stocks left in the warehouse and, happily, has now sourced another supplier, ensuring the amazing productions will continue to be made.

Plasticine even made an appearance at the 2009 Chelsea Flower Show when presenter James May and around 2,000 members of the public constructed a show garden called Paradise in Plasticine. Featuring flowers and vegetables, it took six weeks and 2.6 tonnes of Plasticine in various colours to create and is thought to be the largest Plasticine model ever created.

The garden went on to be awarded an honorary gold award made from – you've guessed it – Plasticine and it was also the people's choice that year for best small garden. The purists were not altogether happy with the concept however, so, unsurprisingly, no Plasticine gardens have appeared since.

Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl is available to view via BBC iPlayer.



Right: Paradise in Plasticine, a Plasticine garden created by James May and around 2,000 members of the public, made an appearance at the 2009 Chelsea Flower Show.

A Way of Life

Richard Bradley interviews documentary photographer Homer Sykes

“I can’t think of a worse way of spending your weekend than being stood on a football terrace among thousands of people chanting,” laughs photographer Homer Sykes, “but then again – I’ve never really been a joiner-in.” I’m spending the day with Homer at his south London home, and I’d remarked how it’s culturally acceptable for your stereotypical British male to ditch their family at the weekend to go off and watch their football team in action (Homer prefers getting sports news pinged to his phone in digested format). For the pair of us, the activity taking us away at the weekend is more niche: attending and photographing British country customs and annual traditions.

I’d been familiar with Homer’s work since coming across his 1977 photobook Once a Year: Some Traditional British Customs in the early 2000s. I loved the way his photos captured these ancient traditions against a backdrop of more mundane 1970s period detail: flower garlands, swords and reindeer antlers all mixed up with sideburns, flares and plastic sandals.

Once a Year was the catalyst that kickstarted my own fascination with British folklore (“You’re not the first person that’s said that to me,” Homer observes, gratified). As a non-driver, it wasn’t feasible for me to reach most of these far-flung rural events myself, so I trained my own lens a little closer to home, and for the past decade have been photographing the traditions of my native county of Derbyshire – a deeply odd place whose annual events encompass everything from the genteel rural craft of well dressing to the frankly bizarre annual hen-racing and toe-wrestling contests.

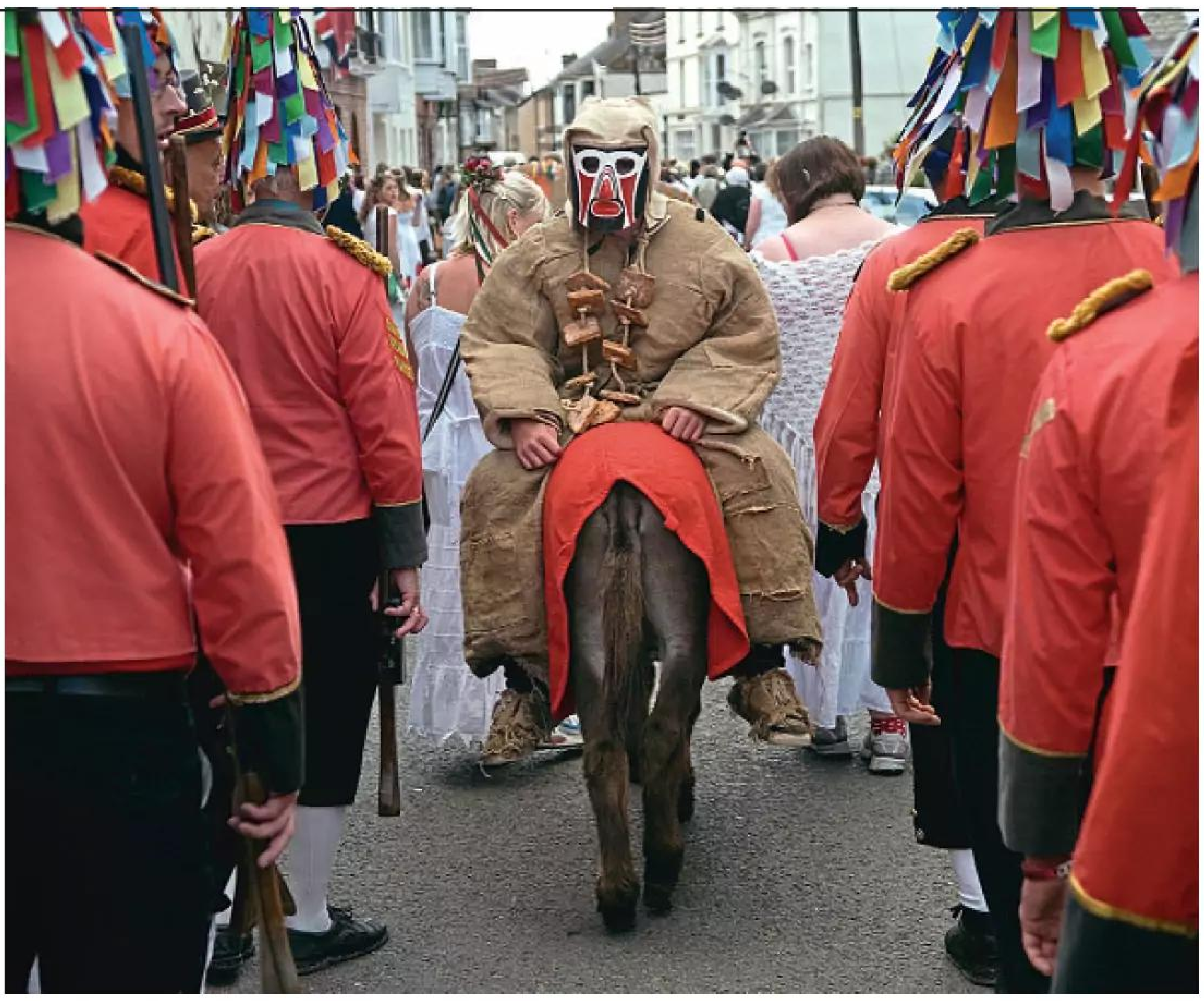
Mine and Homer’s paths crossed on the first day of 2020 when we were both present to document the Mapleton Bridge Jump on the Derbyshire-Staffordshire border, which sees hardy participants perform a ritual New Year’s Day leap off Okeover Bridge and into the chilly waters of the River Dove. I’d corresponded with Homer previously over email but took the opportunity to mob him in person and profess myself a fan of his work.

Having documented many of Britain’s best-known customs in the 1970s for Once a Year (republished in expanded form by Dewi Lewis Publishing in 2016), Homer initially began revisiting some of these same events around 2005 to: “See what had happened and changed, and maybe I would do a before and after. And I went to a few, and realised that, for me, it was ridiculous – I’d photographed this stuff – why

Above: Participants in the Shrove Tuesday football contest at Atherstone, Warwickshire gather in the Angel Inn. Left: One of numerous traditions little-known outside the communities where they occur is the Burning of the Ashen Faggot at Laymore in Dorset.

Photographs: Homer Sykes, (Homer) Richard Bradley

AN ANNUAL AFFAIR
Homer Sykes



Left: Homer with a copy of his new photobook. Right: The Hunting the Earl of Rone procession through Combe Martin, Devon.

was I repeating myself? There were a lot of non-professional photographers there photographing, a lot of iPhone photographers. So, I realised that if I was going to do a new body of work, I had to find events that other people weren't photographing."

The result is the recently published (also through Dewi Lewis) An Annual Affair: Some Traditional British Calendar Customs, featuring numerous traditions little-known outside the communities where they occur, such as Dorset's Burning of the Ashen Faggot, Cornwall's Oak Apple Day, and Bedfordshire's Wilkes Walk, where a 1646 will states a choir member must stand on their head during proceedings.

Through researching and attending more than a hundred of these obscure British events, Homer encountered a unifying theme: "During that day they have a feast, they have a meal. That's very much part of the day's events. You can hardly go to an annual event without there being some sort of celebratory meal. That became very much part of what I was interested in documenting. I think it said something about British society today."

An Annual Affair was funded through a Kickstarter campaign, and it was this that brought me to Homer's house. In addition to the basic option of a signed copy of the book with your name listed in the appendix as a sponsor, backers could select from a variety of higher-tier options. One of these included the chance to visit Homer at his London home and have him critique a selection of your own photos – which sounded to me, as a longtime fan of his work, like a unique opportunity. I took the plunge and clicked on the pledge button.

Following the critique and a convivial lunch prepared by Homer over a shared bottle of wine, we sat down to discuss his long career as a photographer and his interest in documenting British society and customs. His parents married in Shanghai in 1947 but he never met his father (also named Homer), an employee of the China National Aviation Corporation, who was killed in an airfield accident in June 1948 during the early stages of the pregnancy that would result in the infant Homer. His mother, Helen, returned to her family home in Vancouver where Homer was born in January 1949, but the pair of them left for England in the autumn of 1950, settling in Birmingham.

> **"As a documentary photographer, you've got an excuse to go and be nosey, and to see what people are doing."**

Despite his globally far-reaching family background, Homer rejects any suggestion this imbues his documentation of British traditions and society with an objective take: "No – I'm definitely very English, I don't think of myself as Canadian at all. The new work is certainly not an outsider's take. However, I've always been an observer – I live in suburban London, I've always travelled to villages and small-town communities. And as a photographer, you're nearly always a visitor – as a documentary photographer, you need to be able to integrate quickly and easily, albeit at a very superficial level for a short period of time. But that's what I do – you move in, you make friends, you make pictures, you go home."

Aside from his self-directed project to document British customs and traditions, Homer carved out a successful career as a photographer in demand by the Sunday newspaper colour supplement magazines. This steady stream of magazine commissions led to Homer being called on to photograph some extremely famous people – Paul McCartney, the Rolling Stones, Margaret Thatcher. He laughs when I quiz him on whether he felt overawed at having to document celebrities of this magnitude.

"Oh, no – goodness, I'm certainly not awed by them – no. I've never had any particular interest in stars, and in famous people. I have photographed very many famous people, but I'm not in awe of them, in any way. I've only ever wanted to make realistic pictures of those people, un-posed images that try and capture who they really are," he says.

"In those magazine commission days, you would turn up and you often wouldn't know a thing about who these people were, because there was no internet. Picture editors would phone and say: 'Can you go and photograph so-and-so?' And you'd say: 'Well, who are they?' And the editor would say: 'I've no idea, we've been told we need a photographer there on Thursday morning at 11 o' clock.' And you'd just go and have to busk it, basically – it was about making the right impression when you turned up and making them feel at ease. At the sharp end you had to be able to deliver.

"As a professional photographer I've always been interested in the idea of relicensing images after the initial use, so I needed to retain the copyright of the work. That was not always understood by my editors. I've fought bitterly and lost lots of work because I've insisted on the copyright – I've always wanted to own what I did, to make pictures the way I wanted and do the initial edit and not be told what to do."

This doggedness proved to be a good long-term strategy, serving Sykes well once the lucrative magazine commissions began to dry up around the turn of the century, coinciding with the shift from analogue film-based photography to digital imagery becoming the industry standard. He has invested time and energy in keeping abreast of the changing times, reviewing his amassed archive of more than 20,000 reportage images dating back to the 1960s, scanning the negatives to digital files and uploading them online, where he licenses them through his own Photoshelter site.

He has embraced social media, finding Facebook a useful tool to reconnect with contacts from way back when and building up a devoted following on Instagram including celebrity fans such as Maxine Peake and Jarvis Cocker (who is listed in the back of An Annual Affair as another of his Kickstarter supporters).

Café Royal Books, an independent publisher of limited print run zines celebrating British documentary photography, has published 30 titles of Homer's work, covering diverse sub-strata of British society ranging from hippies and druids celebrating midsummer solstice at Stonehenge to the Sloane Rangers of the 1980s.

Viewed collectively, Homer's output presents a remarkable record of British society over the past 50 years. "That's the joy of being a documentary photographer," he concludes. "You've got an excuse to go and be nosey, and to see what people are doing. And that is exactly what I love about photographing traditional country customs – you can get out, and you can see and meet these people, and understand some of their way of life, and you think: 'Crikey, it's still going on – isn't it amazing that all this stuff is happening?'"

Homer's photographic archive can be viewed at homersykes.photoshelter.com An Annual Affair: Some Traditional British Calendar Customs is published by Dewi Lewis (dewilewis.com/products/an-annual-affair)

In Sharp Focus

Andrew Wilson goes behind the lens of a renowned Midlands photography studio

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In which case, without these remarkable images taken in and around Derby by WW Winter photography studio since 1852, page after page of this month's magazine would be filled with breathless adjectives and well-worn cliches – all dedicated to this one, remarkable story.

Attempting to describe the content, quality and sheer quantity of Winter's archive would require a word count of millions. Add to that, a 170-year-plus history of what is believed to be the oldest uninterrupted photography business in the world, and you can understand why it's best to simply let these pictures speak for themselves.

It's nothing short of a miracle to discover a photography studio embedded so deeply in the past. But the business – founded by Frenchman Emmanuel Nicolas Charles in 1852 – is now looking forward to an equally exciting future.

The first shop and studio was established at 2 Midland Road, Derby almost directly opposite Winter's present building. A decade later, Walter William Winter began working for Charles who sadly died the next year.

Winter married Charles' widow Sarah, took over the management of the photography business and opened new premises in 1867. While this was a state-of-the-art daylight studio, Winter was also an early adopter of carbon arc lighting.

Walter William Winter himself enjoyed great fame as a photographer, and in 1906 was invited to visit Rangemore Hall in Staffordshire to photograph King Edward VII. Those images are still on display in the studio, along with all the relevant correspondence with Buckingham Palace.

In 1910, he sold the business to Henry Sheppard and William Henry King, who had joined the business as a photographic assistant 14 years earlier. King then bought out Sheppard, and the business has remained in the King family ever since. Today, the day-to-day running of the business is overseen by Angela Leeson (a relative of the King family) and photographer Louisa Fuller.

Much of the collection is studio-based portraits and wedding photographs, but it also includes a large archive of industrial and commercial images. Winter's had a contract with the Derby Co-operative Provident Society to photograph their buildings, along with their vehicles – both mechanical and horse-drawn. Other clients included Royal Crown Derby, Leys Malleable Castings, and Qualcast. In total, Winter's claims to have a million images – many with great historic value – spread across glass plates, film and digital.

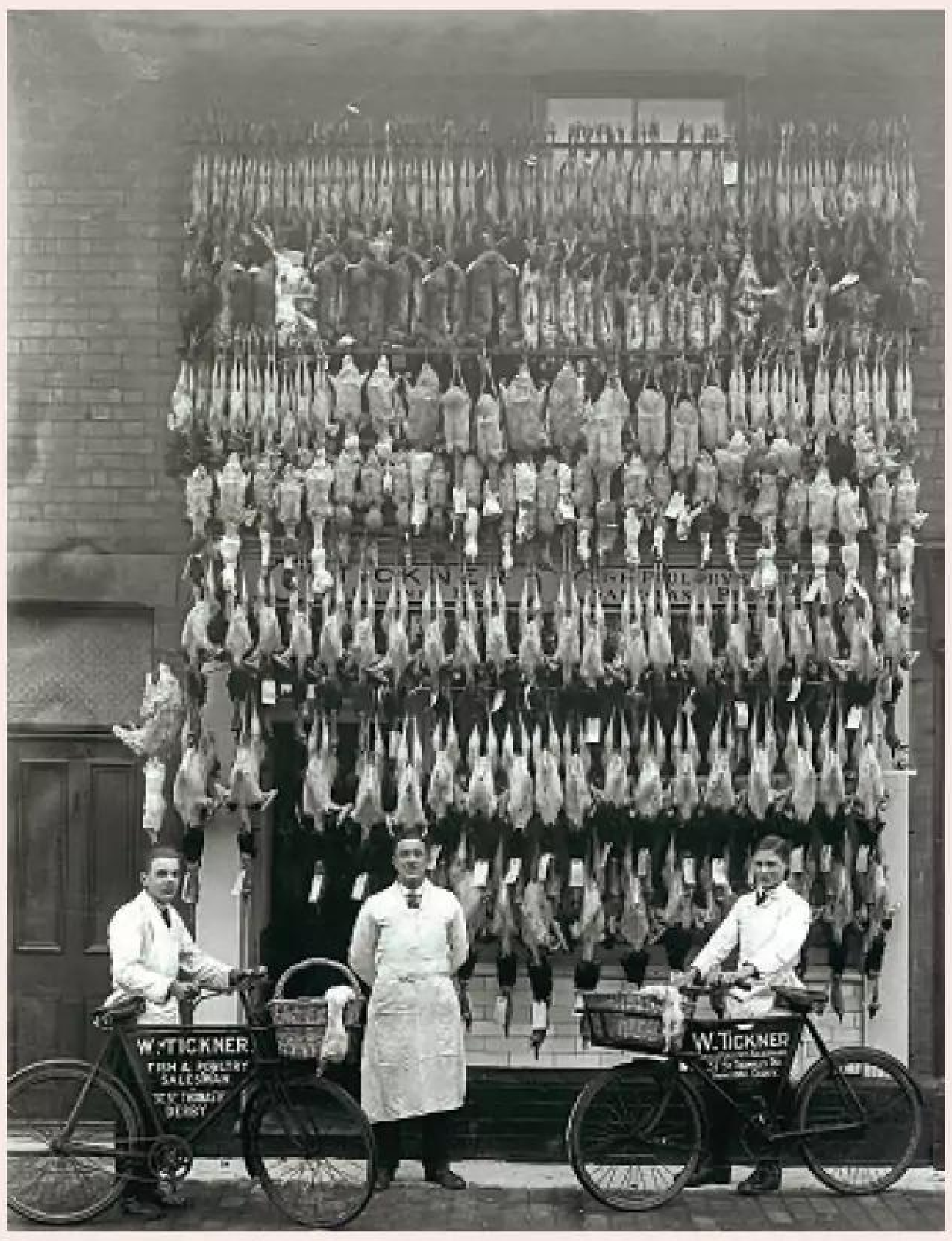
WW Winter Heritage Trust is poised to begin fundraising for the purchase and refurbishment of the building, restoration of the original daylight studio and a digitisation programme for the million images in the collection. This work will enable greater public access and allow the business to continue taking photographs to add to this important archive of the Derby.

The trust hopes the project will be well under way when the studio celebrates its 175th anniversary in 2027. In the meantime, guided tours for small groups are on offer, from £10 per person.

To book a tour, contact WW Winter on 01332 345224 or office@wwwinter.co.uk

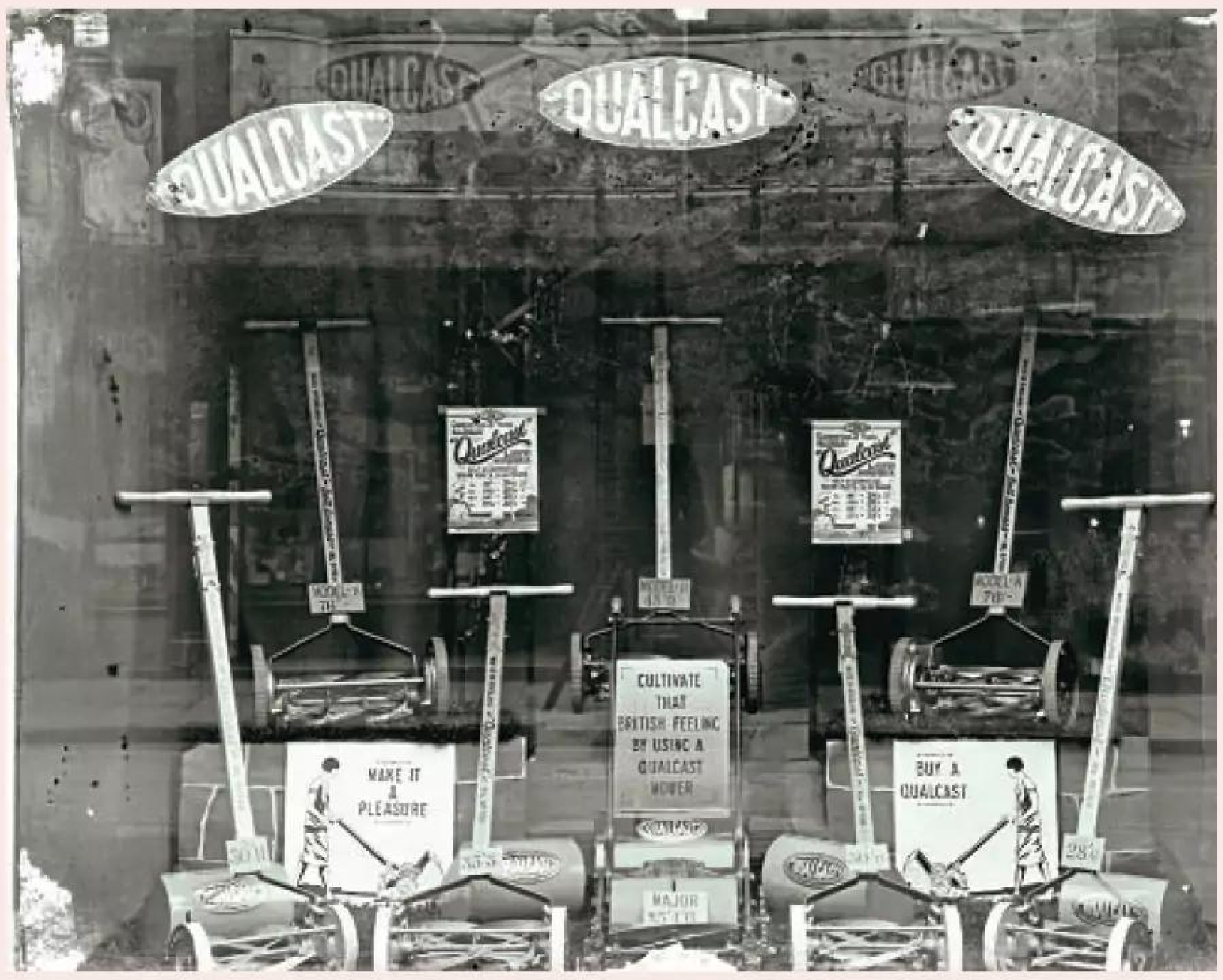
Photographs: WW Winter

A member of Derby rowing club photographed in the 1870s.


W. TICKNER
W. TICKNER

In the early 20th century, Winter's photographed this Christmas display outside the premises of W Tickner Fish and Poultry of Derby.

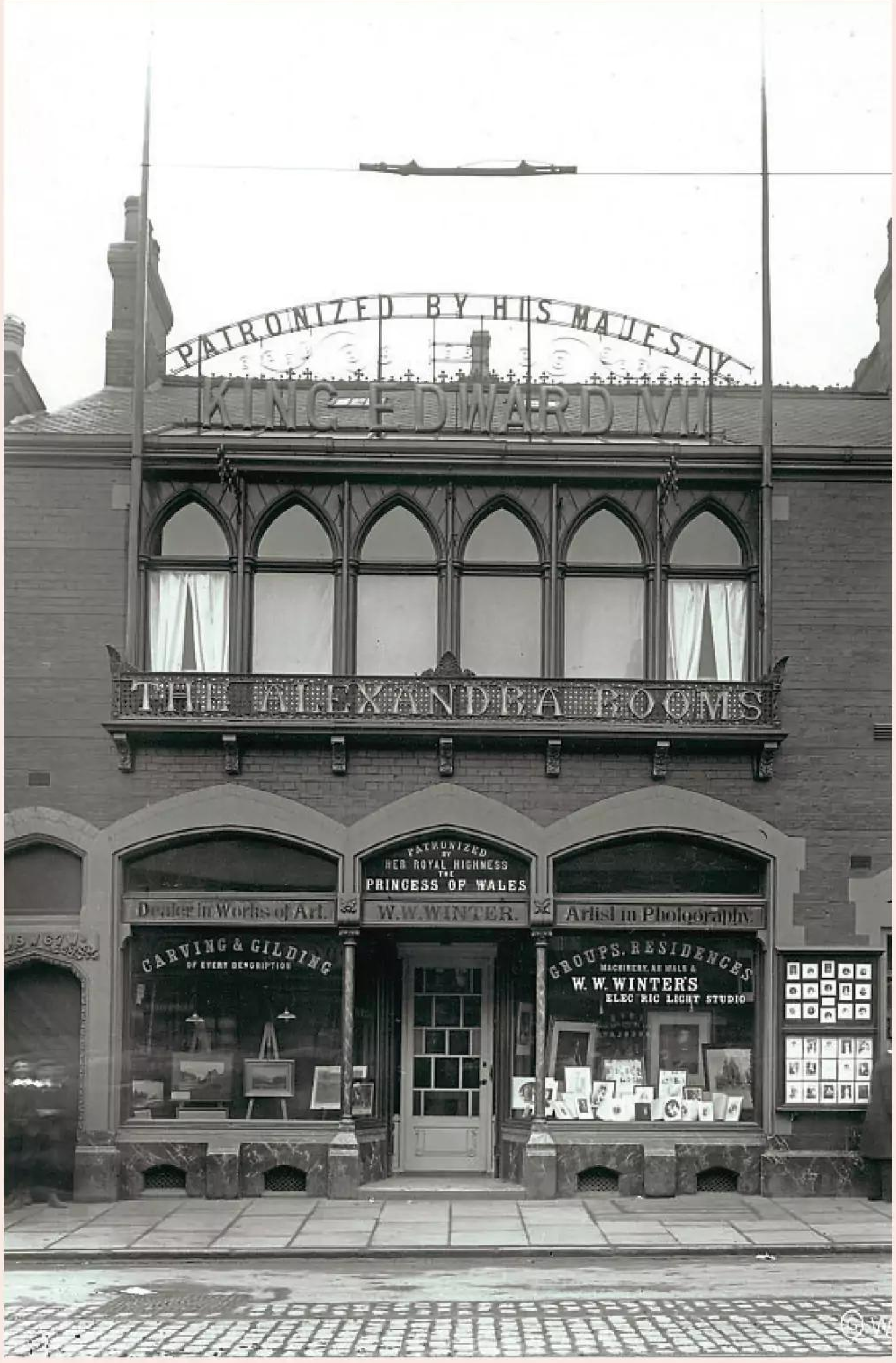
The WW Winter archive includes a million images spread across glass plates, film and digital.


QUALCAST
QUALCAST
QUALCAST
MAKE IT A PLEASURE
CULTIVATE THAT BRITISH FEELING BY USING A QUALCAST MOWER
BUY A QUALCAST

Commercial clients of WW Winter included lawnmower manufacturer Qualcast, a major employer in the area.

HANTS.
HOUSE FURNISHERS.
J. JONES & SONS.
G. POTTER & SONS
SEEDS.
PEACOCK & WETTON WHOLESALE DRAPERS

A staff day out for the employees of J Jones & Sons.


PATRONIZED BY HIS MAJESTY
KING EDWARD VII
THE ALEXANDRA ROOMS
PATRONIZED BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS OF WALES
Dealer in Works of Art
W.W. WINTER.
Artist in Photography
CARVING & GILDING OF EVERY DESCRIPTION
GROUPS, RESIDENCES
W. W. WINTER'S ELECTRIC LIGHT STUDIO

In 1867, WW Winter relocated to a state-of-the-art daylight studio located opposite its original premises.

A Doyen of Broadcasting

Alan Thompson looks back on the work of the "world's most durable presenter"

You will find only one entry for "world's most durable presenter" in an old copy of the Guinness Book of Records. That's because there has only ever been one – Bob Danvers-Walker. His friendly deep voice was often heard, although he was rarely seen. Cyril Frederick "Bob" Danvers-Walker was born in Cheam, Surrey on 11 October 1906. Over the next 80 years, he broadcast on radio, television, in films and is probably best remembered for his off-screen commentaries for the Pathé News newsreels in cinemas and as the announcer on television's Take Your Pick. However, Bob's career didn't start from behind a microphone.

As a youngster, he travelled to Australia with his parents. His father was Australian, and he was keen on the fledgling motor racing industry. He said: "I took a job as a mechanic and it was in the days when the mechanic had to go with the driver for durability tests. You had to hand-pump the petrol and one of the cars went up in flames. The boss said to me: 'We'll see you back at work tomorrow.' I replied something I won't repeat here and didn't go back." That was the conclusion for Bob's aspirations to become a racing driver or mechanic.

Bob had a love of the countryside. "For a time I worked as a 'jackaroo' – the Australian equivalent of a cowboy – in the bush." Riding tall in the saddle was a life that suited him well until nature took a hand.

"There was drought for three years, so I wasn't able to continue working there. But I was told by the farm manager that if ever it rains again, to come back."

In the meantime, Bob took an interest in radio which was still in its infancy and worked for stations 3DB in Melbourne and 2FS Sydney. He was the radio commentator on the construction and opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932.

As he had had his first taste of wireless, Bob wanted to return to England to try his luck at the BBC's Empire Service. Bob confessed that he probably "dropped a clanger" during the interview when he met the hierarchy and obviously had not said the right things. Unperturbed, he had met up with Brian Mickie who was involved with a company called the International Broadcasting Company (IBC) which had been set up by Captain Leonard Plugge who had attempted as early as 1925 to set up commercial radio.

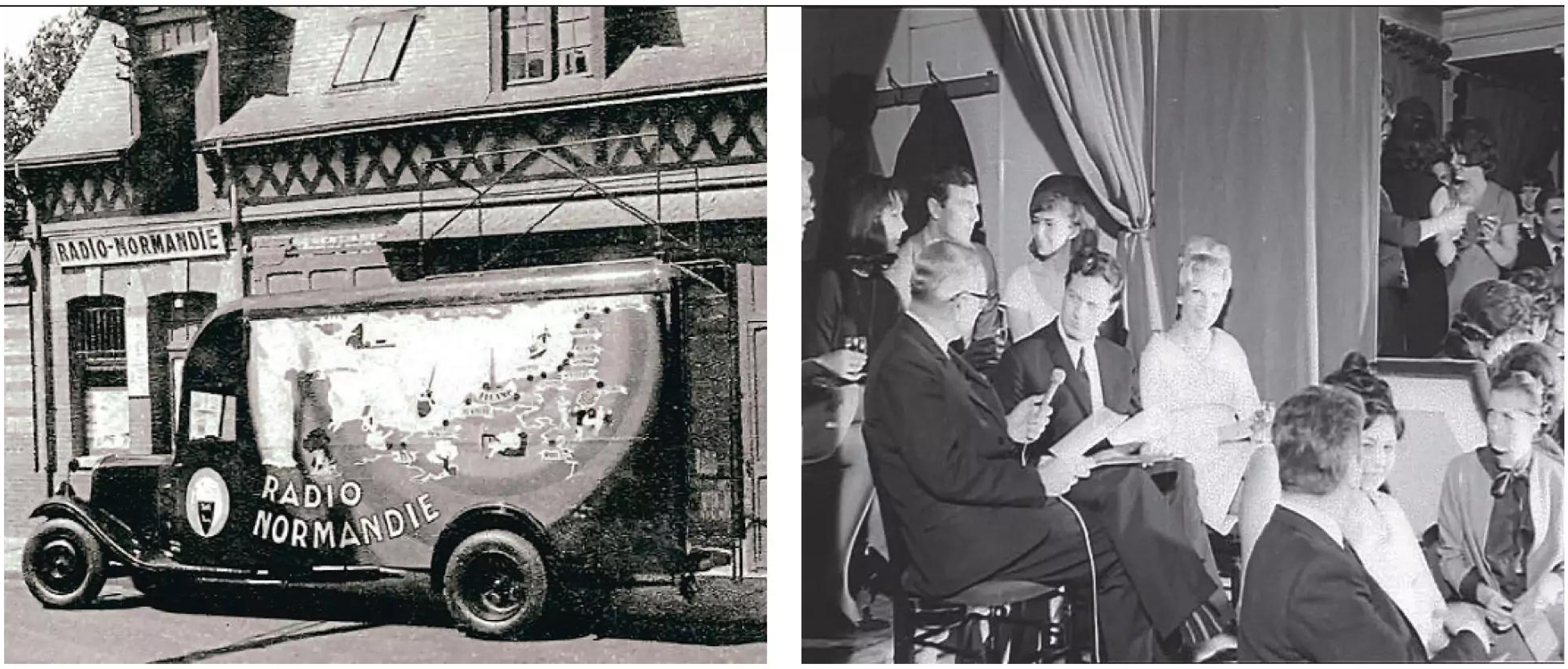
"Brian Mickie said to me: 'You've had *experience*…?' That was evidently enough to get me the job as an announcer on the company's French station Radio Normandy based in the fishing village of Fécamp."

Above: Bob Danvers-Walker commentating in a sound booth in the 1950s, a decade in which he was heard on radio, television and newsreels.

Bob immediately went to the station and became chief announcer. He recalled with a razor-sharp memory: "The studio was a small room housed in a hayloft. It was situated over an office with typists clattering away on their typewriters downstairs with a huge blackjack heating stove they had to heap the coals on. Every time we opened the microphone to make an announcement, we had to shout downstairs: 'Silence s'il vous plaît.' When we'd finished the announcement, we'd call down: 'Merci.' It wasn't just the case of announcing the programmes, we had to put the transmitters on the air and go to the transmitter site to oversee the operation.

"We had to put on the programmes that been sent to us on 78rpm shellac acetate discs on hand-wound gramophones. Later, sometimes, it was on a film sound track. There was little time to relax. It was work, eat, sleep, work, eat, sleep. There were many would-be broadcasters who came to the station, and they found out very quickly it wasn't a case of just announcing the programmes. We used to send them back in shiploads."

Photographs: British Pathé



Left: The Radio Normandy studio was in a hayloft above an office with typists clattering away in between announcements. Right: The Beatles manager Brian Epstein being interviewed by Pathé News commentator Bob Danvers-Walker in 1965.

Other presentation staff either recording in London or announcing live in Normandy included Charles Maxwell, Stephen Williams, brother and sister Betty and Bernard “Uncle Benjy” McNab, Tom Ronald who went on to produce the BBC radio series Life With the Lyons, and the chief outside broadcast operator Roy Plomley, who is best remembered for BBC Radio’s Desert Island Discs.

Bob also voiced commercials. One he produced for Les Allen’s Piano Requests was advising a young girl who had written in saying her hair “just wasn’t attractive” and he advised her to use the sponsor’s shampoo for “lovely curly, wavy hair”. When Bob heard the commercial played back, he quipped: “When I hear that recording, I can mouth the words all over again.”

The competition from the commercial stations was not appreciated by the BBC. “They didn’t like us at all,” says Bob, “the BBC used to conveniently close down at 10 o’clock and thought everyone should be in beddy-byes by that time. So, listeners would search the ether, twiddle the old tuning knob to see what else they could find.”

IBC started to expand its operation throughout the 1930s and rented airtime from Post Parisien, Toulouse, Cote d’Azur and then the Spanish circuit opened. Bob was responsible for setting up and staffing them. But it became increasingly dangerous as Bob recalls: “It was in 1936 that the three-year Spanish Civil War broke out and small arms fire could frequently be heard in the streets. It was a hairy-chested moment.”

Bob returned to Normandy to resume his duties at the original station. But life wasn’t peaceful there for long: “With the outbreak of the World War Two, the French authorities pulled the plug on the transmissions as it was found that the Luftwaffe were using the transmissions to get a fix on their geographical position. It was at this time that propaganda broadcasts were being made by Lord Haw-Haw and Joseph Goebbels.”

> **“During the 1950s, Bob was heard on radio, television and newsreels.”**

Radio Normandy recommenced transmissions in November 1939 as Radio International and Bob was asked to take counter blasts at the German propaganda. This he did with great effect. Bob had married wife Vera in 1933, and this was an uncertain time, so they decided to return to England – and just in time. German forces marched into France and destroyed a lot of the recording and broadcast equipment.

It was not long before Bob’s rich golden tones were used again but this time as the offscreen narrator on the Pathé News newsreels for cinema.

“During the war years, we had to boost morale. Initially the scripts were written for me but towards the end of the war I wrote them myself. It was quite a challenge as there would be two newsreels a week and later when there was horse racing, we had to get the film processed with commentary done overnight ready for distribution to the cinemas the next morning. It was that quick.”

He thrived on adrenalin and emphasised retirement was never in his lexicon. Adrenalin was a quality that was very often useful with some of the news stories he had to cover but some stories could really touch the heart even for a seasoned and hardened newsman.

“I must admit I had a lump in my throat with some of the stories I had to cover. I don’t think there is any shame in emotion. The one story I found very emotional was the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill.”

During the 1950s, Bob was heard on radio, television and newsreels. On radio he was the announcer for the prizes on Take Your Pick! which aired on Radio Luxembourg. The show also transferred to Associated-Rediffusion on the fledgling ITV network in 1955. Bob recalled his time on the show with hostess Elizabeth Kingdom, Alec Dane on the gong for the yes/no interlude, Harold Smart on the electric organ, and “your quiz inquisitor” Michael Miles who would set up forfeits for the contestants and offer prizes in 10 boxes with a mystery prize in box 13.

Bob said that Miles could be extremely moody: “If anyone could go a full minute without saying yes or no in the yes/no interlude they won five shillings, which Michael had to pay out of his own pocket and would do his nut over it. When the star prize was announced, the floor manager would wave his arms and get everyone in the audience to say ‘ooooooh’. The prize might have been a television, fitted furniture or washing machine which in postwar Britain was a luxury.”

Bob had very little spare time. As well as his newsreel, radio and TV quiz commitments, he was also something of a stunt man for the BBC TV series Saturday Night Out presented by Canadian actor Robert Beatty, which was broadcast live.” to “Out, which was presented by Canadian actor Robert Beatty and broadcast live. One newspaper reported that it came with a £30,000 insurance policy. On one occasion he did a tightrope walk but added: "It was with an experienced highwire walker and there was a safety net underneath."

This was in London's Earl's Court where a highwire was strung across the road between buildings. The obvious advice at the time was: "Don't look down." Bob said: "Everyone wanted to see these daring stunts thinking that: 'One day he was going to break his neck.'"

They never wanted to see anyone hurt but would be sitting on the edge of their seats watching the stunt. "Where the highwire stuntman was concerned, I placed my fingertips on his shoulder blades. I was told to concentrate at all times on what was in front. I noticed he had a rather big boil on his neck and that is what I focused on throughout the stunt," he said.

Bob was true to his word and never retired. Throughout the 60s, 70s and 80s he appeared, or his voice was heard, in numerous films, documentaries, TV plays including Armchair Theatre, Mrs Thursday, Resurrected and the updated version of the gameshow Take Your Pick for Southern Television. In 1981, he was one of the key interviewees in two documentaries charting his time with prewar commercial radio, Searching the Ether for independent radio, and Story of Pop Radio for the BBC. He was one of the first guests to be heard on Wiltshire Radio (now Heart Wiltshire) in 1982 and appeared on the test transmission tapes for BBC Wiltshire Sound when it first came on the air in April 1989.

Bob's rich vocal tones are still often heard whenever a Pathé newsreel clip is shown in the news or in documentaries.

He died in May 1990 aged 83. In 1984, I asked if he would ever write his autobiography, he modestly replied: "I don't think so. Let's just say I'm well known but I'm not a celebrity." Most people of a certain age would probably say that he was far too modest about his own impressive achievements. But the legacy of Bob's work lives on, not only on TV and radio but also in our memories.

To see and hear Bob Danvers-Walker in action, go to britishpathe.com

Saturday Club

Derek Lamb remembers the BBC Light Programme's popular music show

Despite the presence of Elvis Presley, Bill Haley and the Everly Brothers in the UK singles chart in the later 1950s, there was very little pop music on BBC Radio. However, listeners tuning in to the Light Programme at 10am on Saturday 4 October 1958 were in for a treat. Instead of half an hour of Saturday Skiffle Club, there was Saturday Club, an unprecedented two hours of popular music introduced with its dedicated theme, Saturday Jump.

This was a significant departure by the corporation. Dennis Morris, head of the Light Programme, had resisted the call for more pop music since "it was the parents and not the teenagers who paid the licence fee." It featured leading artists playing live and was introduced in a very relaxed style by "your old mate" and "resident geezer", BBC staff announcer Brian Matthew. Without audience applause, it was a pacey production, with interviews and the performers reading listener requests and dedications, giving the show something of a club atmosphere.

The Radio Times devoted a sizeable announcement to welcome the new show. Described as "the best in 'pop' entertainment", it had an ambitious range of music. As well as jazz from Humphrey Lyttelton, there was skiffle from Johnny Duncan and the Blue Grass Boys, folk and, on the pop front, Terry Dene. Other sections included "cats call, disc stars you have requested' and "first-time round, spinning the latest releases".

The BBC listening panel was not impressed; one respondent described it as "trash". Fellow announcer Frank Phillips told Brian Matthew he would like to "punch him on the jaw" for what he was doing to the English language. However, within a month, listening figures had grown from 3.5 million to 5 million. By the time it celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1963, listenership was about 20 million. Having a delivery round on a Saturday morning, I can confirm that Saturday Club was playing in most of my customers' homes.

Given this level of popularity, it seems strange that the BBC resisted broadcasting more pop music. In fact, the corporation was keen to do so but hamstrung by a long-standing agreement with the Musicians' Union (MU) on "needle time". This limited the playing of commercial records and Saturday Club was restricted to a handful of discs. In fact, in its early broadcasts, the MU would not allow American artists on the show. So instead, they were interviewed and their recent release played.

The programme was creative in other ways. Brian Matthew would talk over the introduction of a "live" performance in the style of modern presenters. He was keen to grab the audience's attention from the start with some humorous or topical exchange. Famously, the voice of wartime announcer John Snagge was used. Such was Snagge's authority that Brian Matthew was summoned for a severe admonishment by the show's Australian producer. Duly delivered, he then confided to Matthew that the main problem was "it was too bloody good".

Although Brian Matthew presented the show live, most performers had their contributions recorded in a dedicated studio earlier in the week. Initially, each was allocated three hours to record their five or six numbers, a duration that included setting up and sound checks. This was later reduced to 90 minutes. When the arrival of the Everly Brothers was delayed, they recorded six numbers in just 18 minutes. When Sonny and Cher flew in for one day from Switzerland, their sheet music was sent to New York. Arranger Johnny Arthey worked through the night, listening to their records and reproducing it on paper ready for the recording.

The show's producers knew that their recording equipment was not up to the standard of Decca or EMI's studios. However, most performers were satisfied and some even praised the result. A fade out finish, so popular then, was a challenge.

In October 1963, the show celebrated its fifth anniversary. The Beatles, the Everly Brothers, Frank Ifield, Kenny Ball and His Jazzmen, Tommy Roe,

Photograph: (Sonny and Cher) Dutch National Archive

OCTOBER 5—11
Radio Times
BBC
tv
Sound
SIXPENCE
THE FIFTH BIRTHDAY OF SATURDAY CLUB
INTRODUCED BY BRIAN MATTHEW IN THE LIGHT
Education at home for viewers and listeners
Festival: exciting series of television drama

Left: When Sonny and Cher flew in for one day from Switzerland, their sheet music was sent to New York. Arranger Johnny Arthey worked through the night to replace it. Right: By the time Saturday Club celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1963, listenership was about 20 million. Bottom left: Produced by George Martin, Saturday Jump was the theme tune to Saturday Club. Bottom right: Saturday Club briefly survived the transition to BBC Radio 1, however Keith Skues replaced Brian Matthew as presenter.

> **“Despite the modest fees, Saturday Club was the programme that every singer and musician wanted to be on.”**

and Clinton Ford were acquired on a budget of £483, 12*s* 6*d*. The Beatles received £52, 10*s*. Despite the modest fees, Saturday Club was the UK's flagship pop programme, which, as Joe Brown observed, “every singer and every musician wanted to be on”. The Beatles played on 10 occasions.

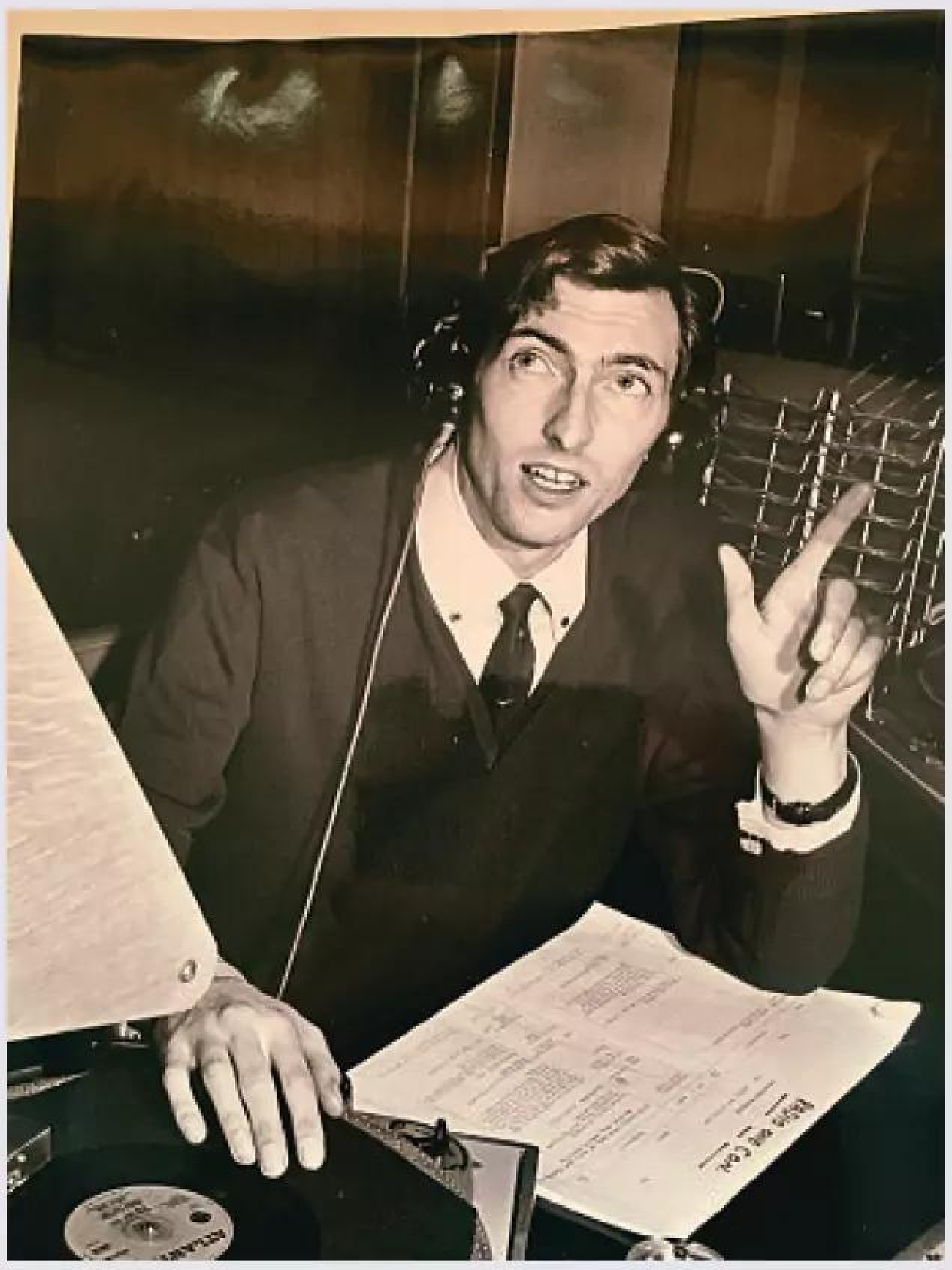
However, just six months later, Radio Caroline began broadcasting pop records all day. Initially, the BBC was untroubled, until their own research confirmed the anecdotal evidence. In 1963, Saturday Club had 19.3% of listeners in London. By July 1964, this had fallen to 13.9% while Caroline secured 12.5%. Within four months, Saturday Club was about to be eclipsed by a bloke on a boat with a box of records.

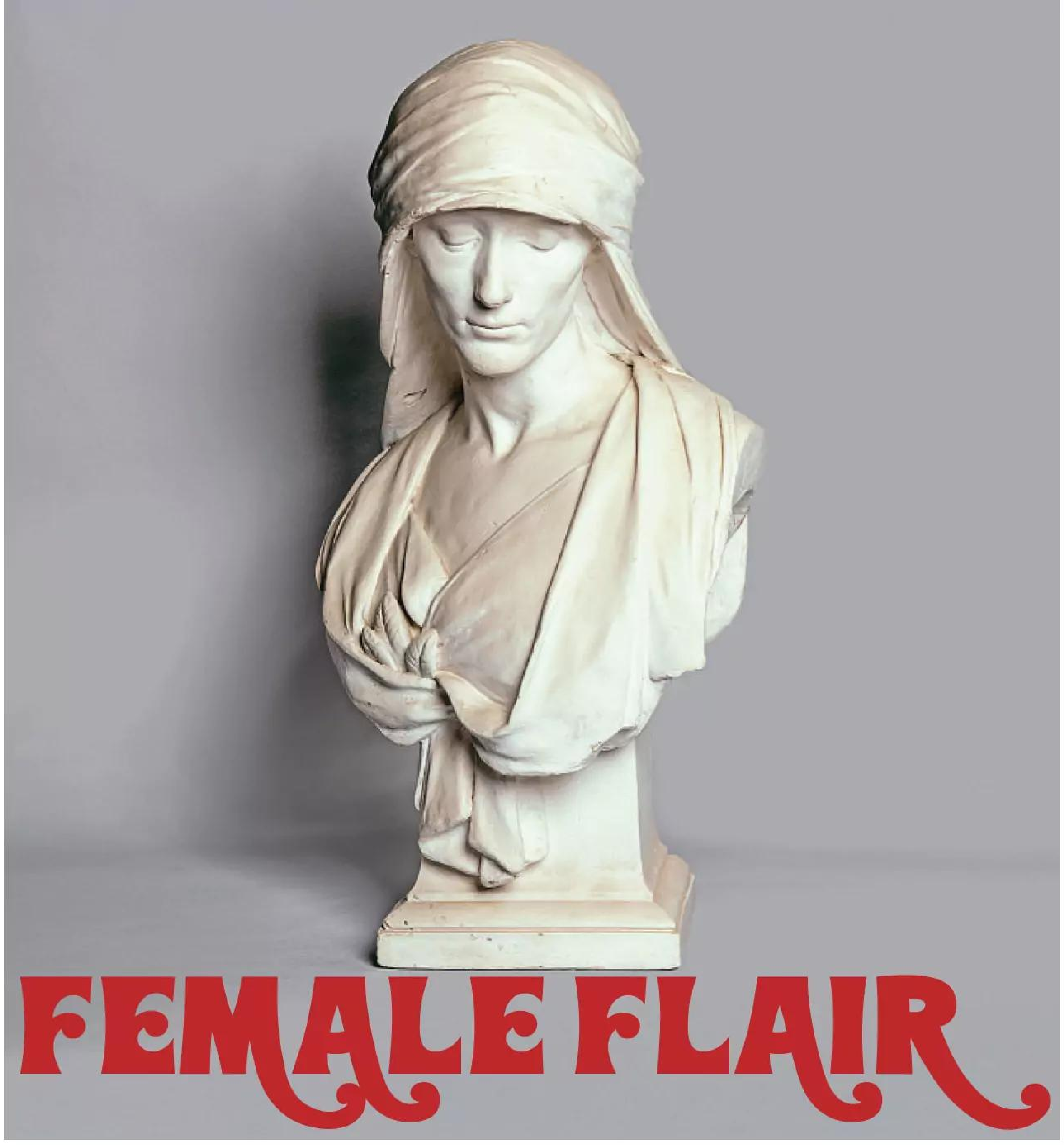
The show's producers fought back, acquiring more needle time and making increasing use of emerging artistes such as Cream and Jimi Hendrix. Famously, Jimi Hendrix played so loudly on his session at Broadcasting House that there were complaints from two floors below, where a string quartet were broadcasting live on the Third Programme. In these changing circumstances, Brian Matthew was somewhat out of sync with the performers. He referred to the Kinks as members of “the shaggy set” and asked why they wore their hair so long.

With the closure of most of pirate radio, the BBC was obliged to begin its own pop music station, BBC Radio 1, in September 1967. Controller Robin Scott was determined that the new service should not carry on with the shows inherited from the Light Programme. However, the lack of needle time proved a stumbling block and Saturday Club continued. However, he replaced Brian Matthew with ex-pirate DJ Keith Skues, along with a refreshed recording of theme tune Saturday Jump and greater needle time.

It did not sit well in the schedules, a dated format with an audience that preferred records and disc jockeys to live renditions. Little more than a year later, in January 1969, Saturday Club ended, replaced by “Kenny Everett at his grannyphone”. The BBC's finances and public taste coincided; while Saturday Club had a budget of hundreds of pounds, Kenny Everett's fee was £40. In 1958, Saturday Club was a groundbreaking development in pop music radio; sadly, by 1969, its time had passed.

The Stars Turn on
PARLOPHONE
THIS RECORD MUST BE PLAYED AT 45 R.P.M.
The use of "EMITEX" cleaning material (available from Record Dealers) will preserve this record and keep it free from dust.
PARLOPHONE
45-R 4519
SATURDAY JUMP
HUMPHREY LYTTELTON And His Band





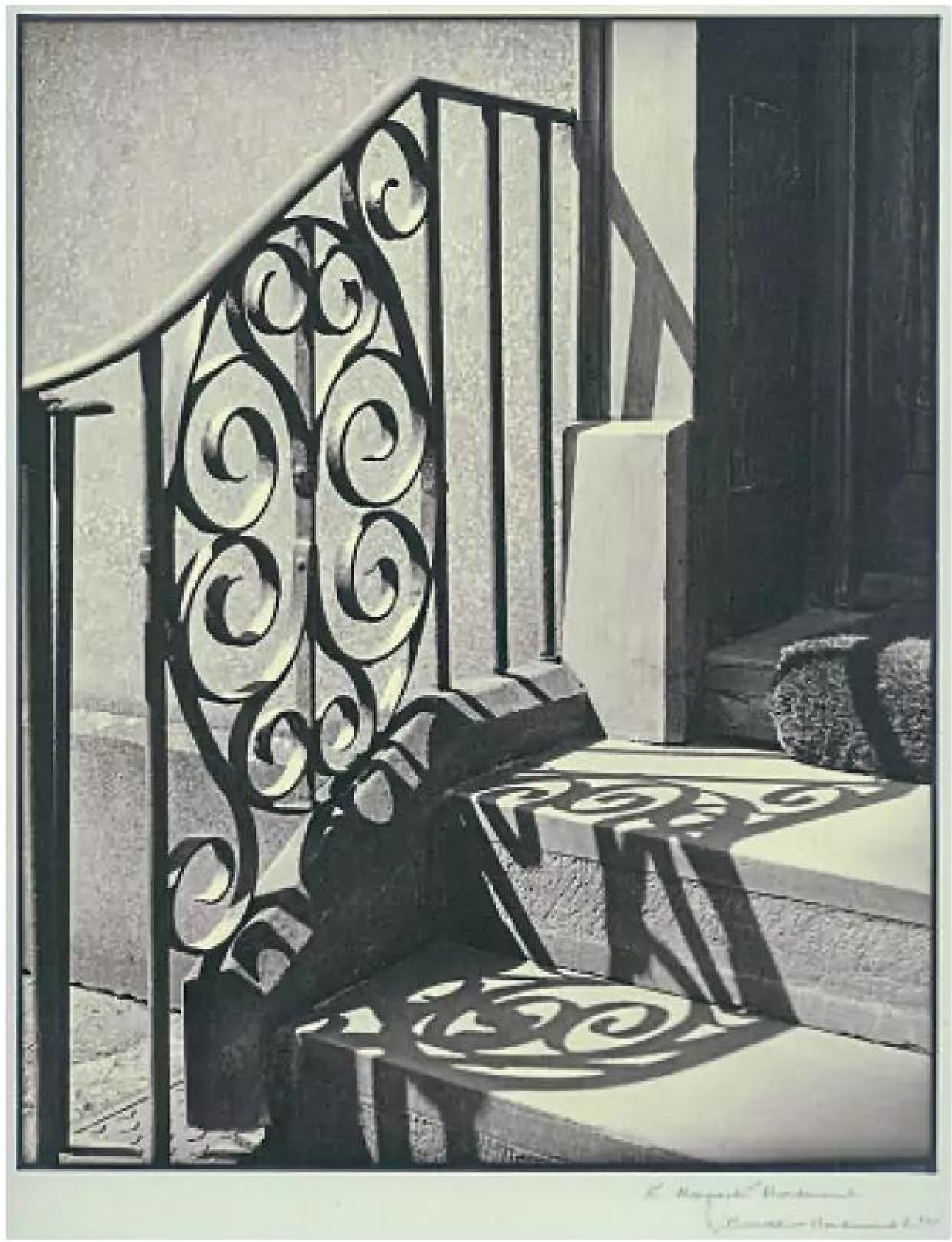
FEMALE FLAIR

Claire Saul previews a new book from the National Trust which showcases some of the talented women connected to more than 60 of its properties

"From the dawn of time, women have always been creative to express how they feel, to make their mark on history, or just to let us know they were there." So writes comedian, broadcaster and campaigner Sandi Toksvig, introducing a new publication from the National Trust. Yet as she notes, the creative work of women has consistently been under-represented over the centuries.

Not so in the places of the National Trust's extensive property portfolio, as illustrated by the new book Women Artists and Designers at the National Trust, which showcases some of the talented women connected to more than 60 of their properties or represented in their collections. Author Dr Rachel Conroy, senior national curator of the conservation charity, presents work spanning six centuries and covering multiple disciplines, including textiles, costume design, ceramics, painting, photography and interior and garden design.

"By the very nature of their intrinsic connection to people and place, the National Trust's collections probably include more work by amateur artists and makers than most major public collections," says Dr Conroy. "It was therefore essential that this book embraced both professional and amateur practice (and all that sits between) so that it reflects the special character of many of our places as material repositories of the creative women who have lived or worked in them."



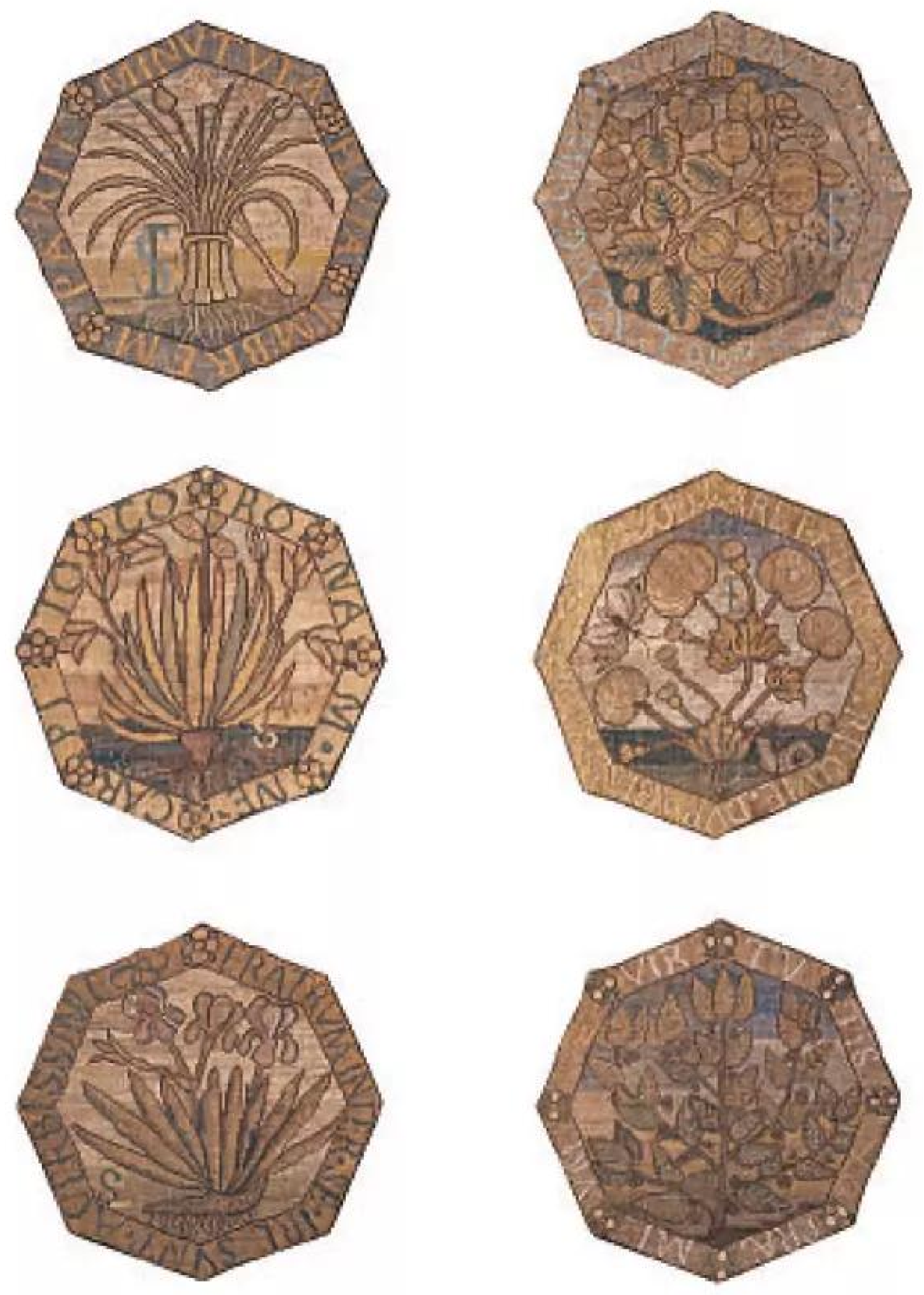
The celebratory roll call begins with Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, more familiarly known as Bess of Hardwick. While her extraordinary life is well documented, less appreciated are her fine embroidery skills. The house collection at Hardwick Hall, Chesterfield in Derbyshire (0124 6850430, nationaltrust.org.uk/hardwick) boasts rare 16th century textile survivals, among them a group of six octagonal panels of embroidered plant and flower stems and Latin mottoes, five featuring "ES" for Elizabeth Shrewsbury. Bess worked on them with Mary, Queen of Scots during Mary's extended custody there.

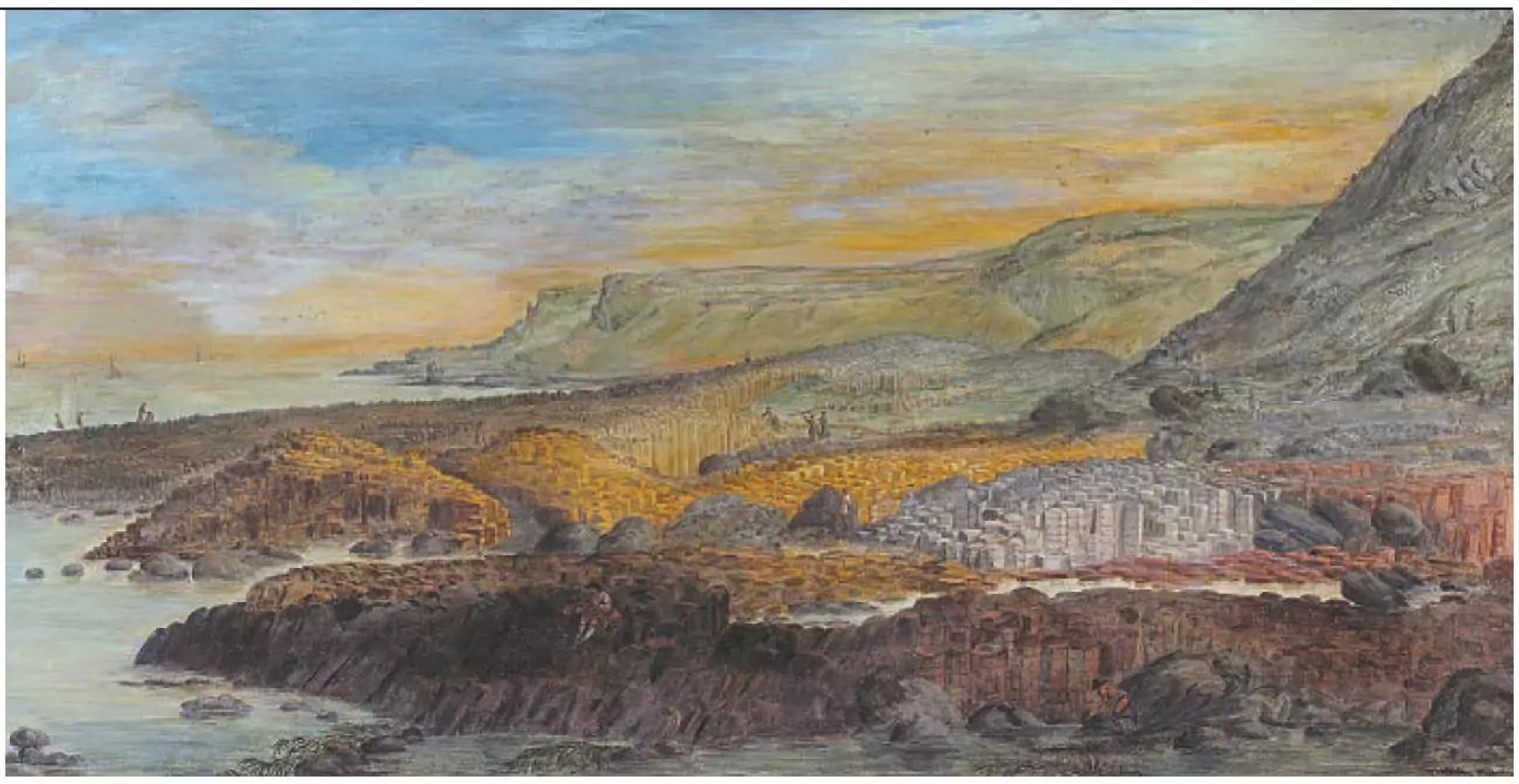
Maria Sibylla Merian was a pioneering entomologist, botanist and naturalist who worked as an engraver and watercolourist. Her 1705 publication, Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium, containing drawings and descriptions of insects at different stages in their life cycles, appears in the libraries at Hardwick Hall and the Blickling Estate at Aylsham, Norfolk (01263 738030, nationaltrust.org.uk/blickling-estate). Her work, considered to be a perfect fusion of art and science, was also featured in the decoration of Chinese and German ceramics, as can be seen at Belton House in Lincolnshire (01476 566116, nationaltrust.org.uk/belton-house).

Through Susanna Drury, the wider world was introduced to the Giant's Causeway on the County Antrim coast (028 2073 1855, nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway). Susanna accurately captured the spectacular site in watercolour at a time when rock formation was increasingly capturing the interest of mid-18th century science, and her work was used by geologists in their research. Rosalba Carriera became "queen of pastel" and its most commercially successful practitioner as it became an important art form in the early 18th century. Her works were brought to Britain by aristocrats returning from their grand tour of Europe, many of whom had commissioned

Top: Emmeline Cust's portrait busts in marble, plaster and metal can be admired at Belton House today, including a striking late 1890s self-portrait in marble. Left: Margaret Hardman's photography often included studies of light and shadow, as illustrated in her 1930s image of light filtering through a stair rail on a doorstep.

Photographs: National Trust & (Bust) Dan Wray, (Notebook) James Dobson, (Stair rail) Edward Chambré Hardman Collection, (Plate/Octagons) Robert Thrift, (Painting) Brian Rutledge





Left: These octagonal panels of embroidered plant and flower stems were created by Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, and Mary, Queen of Scots. Above: Susanna Drury introduced the wider world to the Giant's Causeway on the County Antrim coast with The East Prospect of the Giant's Causeway watercolour, c1739. Below: Maria Sibylla Merian worked as an engraver and watercolourist. Her work featured in the decoration of Chinese and German ceramics, as can be seen at Belton House.

portraits of themselves. A beautiful Carriera portrait of an extravagantly dressed Francis Whithed can be seen at his cousin and co-grand tourist John Chute's family home The Vyne, near Basingstoke in Hampshire (01256 883858, nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne).

Elizabeth (Betty) Ratcliffe was a lady's maid for the resident Yorke family of Erddig Hall and Garden, Wrexham (01978 355314, nationaltrust.org.uk/erddig). Among her collection of artistic creations is a 1773 model of the Temple of the Sun, using wood, mother-of-pearl, mica and glass, inspired by published engravings of Roman ruins in Syria. The Yorke family treasured Ratcliffe's work and displayed it prominently. She was given access to expensive materials and the time to create art, despite some concerns that these privileges would make her a less willing servant.

Other women featured in the book include Emmeline Cust, whose artistic talents have historically been diminished by the circumstances of her marriage to the heir of Belton House in Lincolnshire. Her portrait busts in marble, plaster and metal can be admired at the property today, including a striking late 1890s self-portrait in marble.

Margaret Hardman was the driving force behind the photographic studio of her husband, Edward Chambré Hardman, located in their Liverpool home. Her own photography often included studies of light and shadow, as illustrated in her 1930s image of light filtering through a stair rail on a Carmarthenshire doorstep.

This book coincides with several major exhibitions showcasing the work of women artists, designers, fashion collectors and embroiderers at National Trust properties.

"When you begin to absorb the fabulous range of work ahead of you in this publication then I expect you will find it impossible to believe that art by women has for generations been overlooked, ignored or belittled," Sandi Toksvig writes in her introduction.

Whether you learn of their stories and creative output in its pages, or in person at a National Trust property, her words will certainly ring true.

Women Artists and Designers at the National Trust by Rachel Conroy (£15) is available in store, at National Trust shops or online at shop.nationaltrust.org.uk (0300 123 2025)

Between the Covers

Women Artists and Designers at the National Trust also includes Vita Sackville-West. Much of Vita's prolific output as a writer has fallen into obscurity, overshadowed by other aspects of her extraordinary life. At Sissinghurst, the Kent home which she shared with her husband Harold Nicolson, a new exhibition puts the spotlight on her trailblazing writing through 10 of her works. Through these titles, Between the Covers with Vita: The Life and Literature of Vita Sackville-West looks at the personalities who influenced Vita's writing and features personal objects plus items such as a printing press from Hogarth Press, a publishing company owned by Virginia Woolf and her husband Leonard Woolf, which printed many of Vita's groundbreaking novels.

Above: A notebook containing handwritten notes by Vita Sackville-West, part of the Between the Covers with Vita: The Life and Literature of Vita Sackville-West exhibition.

New illustrations and an animated film by artist Sarah Tanat-Jones bring a contemporary view to her extraordinary life and literature.

Between the Covers with Vita: The Life and Literature of Vita Sackville-West is open until Sunday 7 September. Sissinghurst Castle Garden, near Cranbrook, Kent TN17 2AB (01580 710700, nationaltrust.org.uk/Sissinghurst)

BEST OF BRITISH puzzle page

Twenty Questions

How well do you know Britain – Past and Present? Test your knowledge with our April quiz

1. Who was the script editor on Doctor Who from 1968-1974, and adapted 67 of the show's stories for the Target Books range?
2. Which The Good Life actress won the 1977 BAFTA TV Award for Best Light Entertainment Performance?
3. Which guitarist and founder member of Deep Purple also founded Rainbow?
4. Which comic, when it was first published on 14 April 1950, included Captain Pugwash as one of its characters?
5. Who was the first woman to have a daily music show on BBC Radio 1?
6. Which crime writer is best known for the Inspector Rebus novels?
7. Which National Trail stretches for 268 miles from Derbyshire to the Scottish Borders?
8. Who played Duck Face in Four Weddings and a Funeral?
9. Which stop motion children's TV series, a spin-off from The Herbs, made its debut on 6 April 1970?
10. Who played the elder Edward VII in the ATV series Edward the Seventh which began on 1 April 1975?
11. Who directed Blackmail, the first British talking picture?
12. Which antiques expert was the original co-presenter of Antiques Roadshow?
13. On 29 April 1990, which 21-year-old became the youngest ever world snooker champion?
14. Which former BBC Radio 1 DJ, born Maurice James Christopher Cole, died on 4 April 1995?
15. Who was the voice of The Book in the original radio and TV series of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy?
16. Who played Mrs Pumphrey in the BBC One adaptation of All Creatures Great and Small?
17. Which fashion designer and musician managed bands including Sex Pistols, Adam and the Ants, and Bow Wow Wow?
18. Which actor is best remembered for playing Dr Peter Harrison in the drama series Emergency Ward 10?
19. Who played Chief Inspector Barney Crozier in the original version of Bergerac?
20. Which actress is best remembered for playing Maggie Forbes in the television series The Gentle Touch and C.A.T.S. Eyes?

And I quote...

Which car, according to Autocar, "is more than worthy of consideration as a first foray into the world of classic car ownership, being relatively reliable, cheap to repair and – above all – utterly charming?"

Dialect Detective

Britain has many wonderful regional dialects. Can you spot the correct definition for each of these examples?

1. Mimman (*Berkshire*)
a) An unlucky accident
b) A bog
c) A dairy

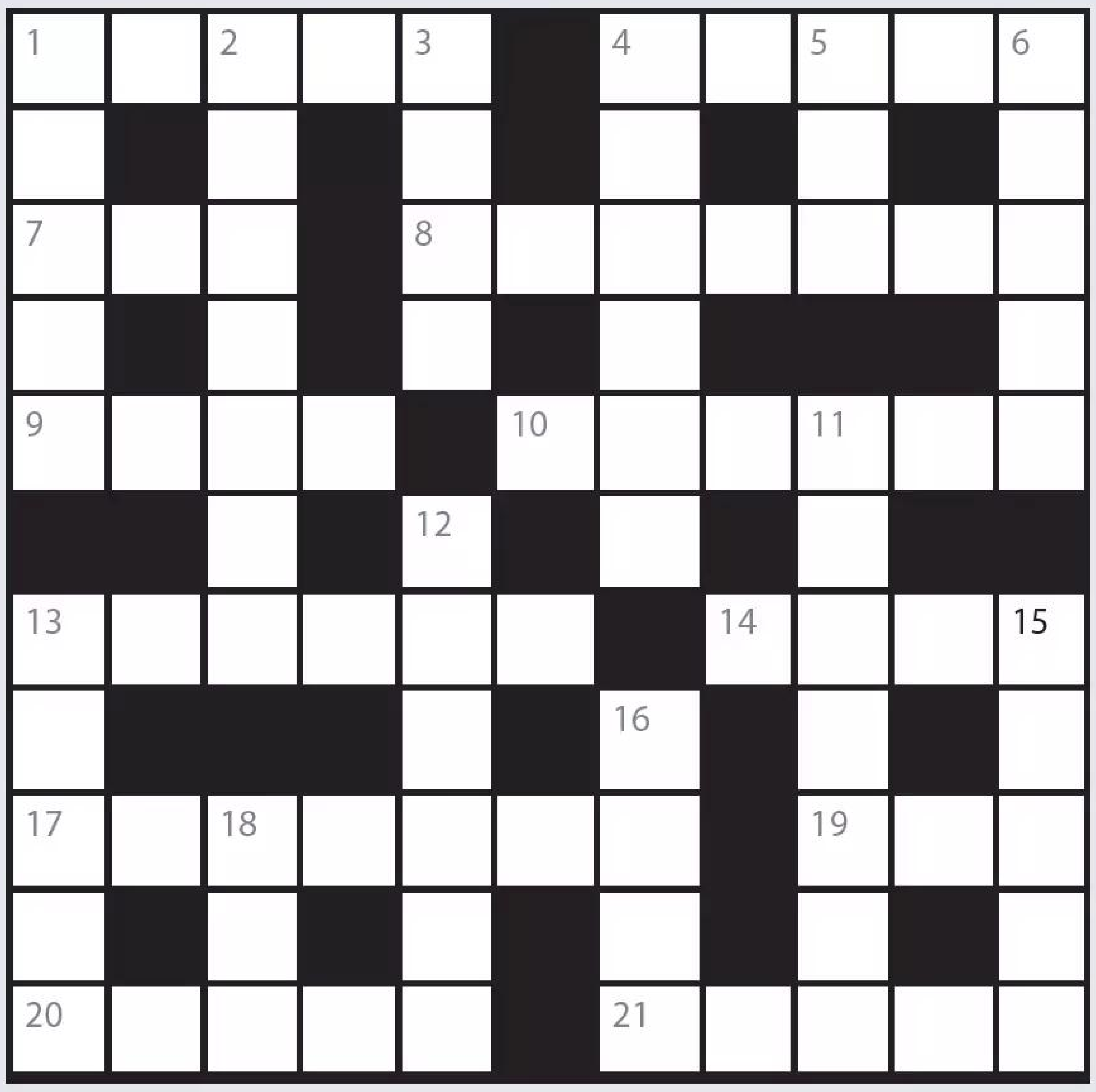
2. Geazon (*Essex*)
a) Scarce
b) Spruce
c) Great

3. Thame (*Lancashire*)
a) A thumb
b) A cake
c) A thrush

4. Parbreaking (*Exmoor*)
a) Fretful
b) Industrious
c) Fusty

Cryptic Crossword

Compiled by CADOC



Across

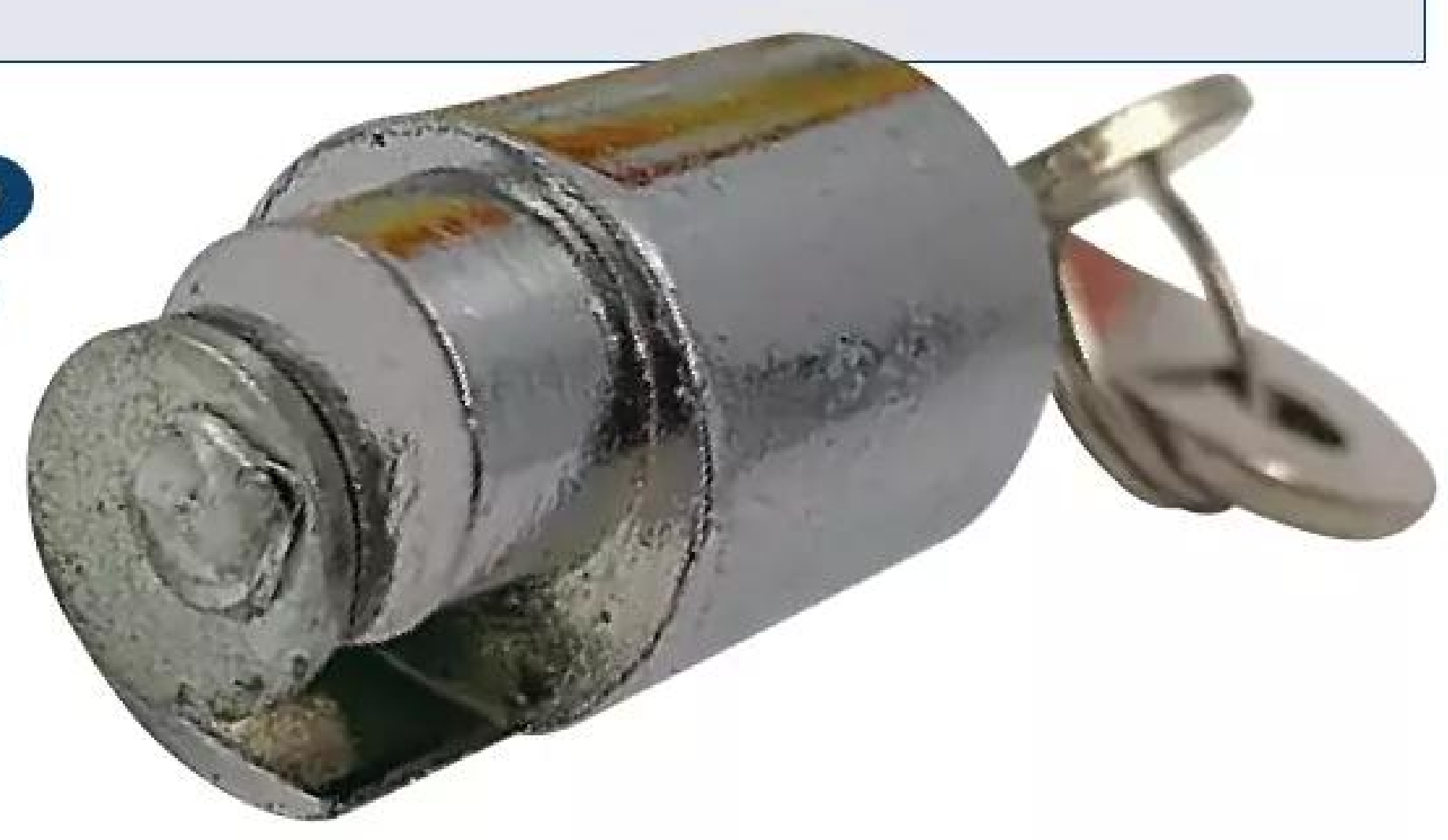
1. 4 and 14 Across. Peter Sellers film? Just a wild guess! (1,4,2,3,4)
4. See 1 Across
7. Reverend Ian Paisley primarily gets a common epitaph (1,1,1)
8. Such downfalls after 1 Down put a damper on things about now (7)
9 and 18 Down. You might have a new such one for breakfast at 12 Down (4,3)
10. Models become confused, but not very often (6)
13. Wedgwood produces jugs or saucers in all haste initially (6)
14. See 1 Across
17. She was the Greek character to get painter returned (7)
19. Shortly I will be unwell (3)
20. But he wouldn't necessarily be sweet-talking when giving you a job! (5)
21. I go with 3 Down drunkenly to reach more than one place (5)

Down

1. Under par badly I get 50 this month (5)
2. Trendy things to eat for Bohemians? (7)
3. Sets about a Hardy character (4)
4. I cry over the Spanish girl (6)
5. End of event, that is, 0 - 0 for example (3)
6. Downs, salts – not to mention cockney braces! (5)
11. Awfully 'ard it is to locate Adrian Mole for instance (7)
12. Terrible teaser this up-coming occasion (6)
13. Crikey – without hesitation they're what the Yanks got around in... (5)
15. ... and learner in outfits are what Scotsmen go around in! (5)
16. "I don't know". It gets over for an April festival (4)
18. See 9 Across

What is it?

These used to keep the kids quiet.



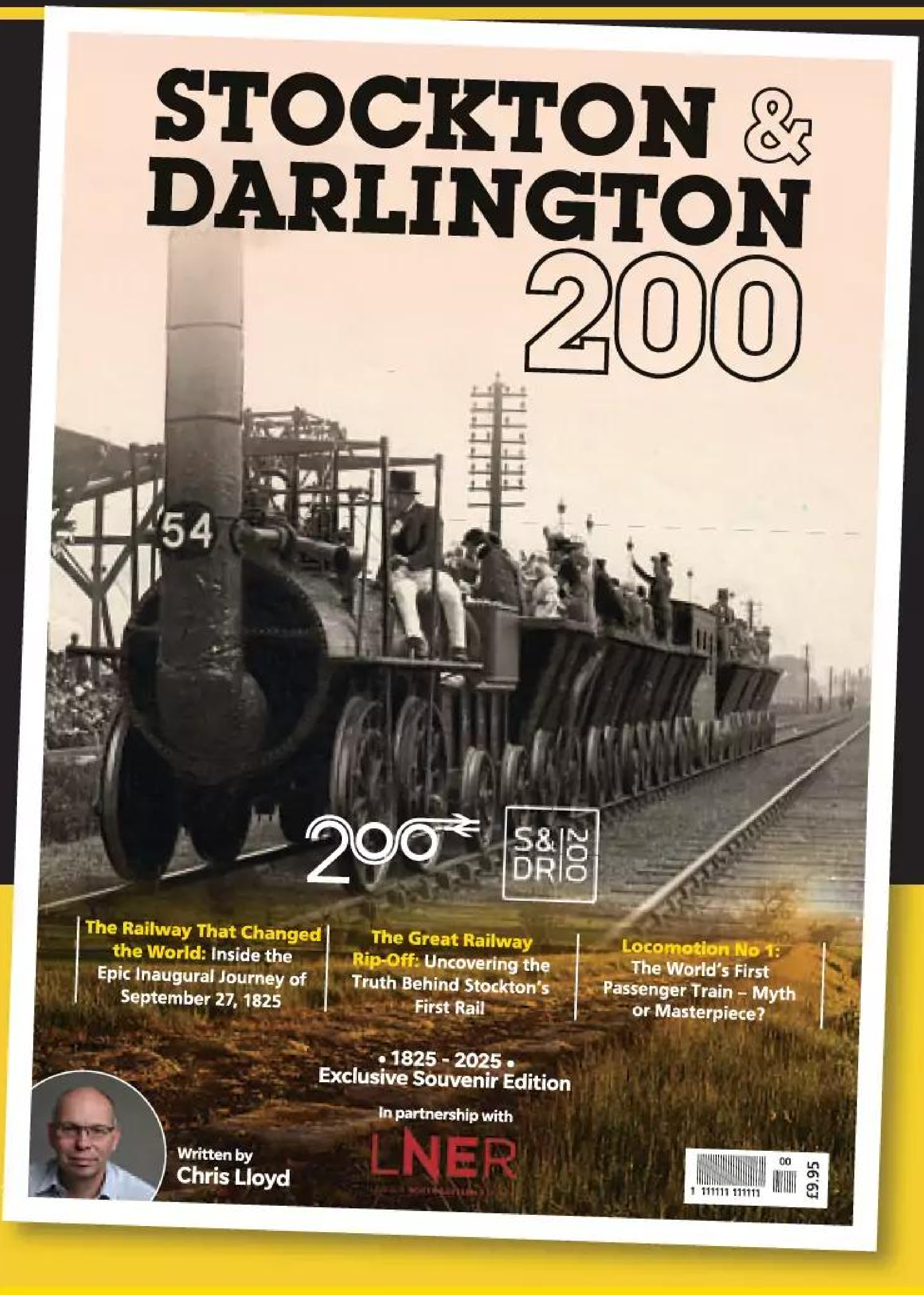
The solutions to this month's puzzles are on page 88

OFFICIAL COMMEMORATIVE MAGAZINE

S&DR 200

200

CELEBRATING THE
200TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BIRTH OF THE
MODERN RAILWAY


STOCKTON & DARLINGTON 200
54
The Railway That Changed the World: Inside the Epic Inaugural Journey of September 27, 1825
The Great Railway Rip-Off: Uncovering the Truth Behind Stockton's First Rail
Locomotion No 1: The World's First Passenger Train – Myth or Masterpiece?
• 1825 - 2025 •
Exclusive Souvenir Edition
In partnership with
LNER
Written by
Chris Lloyd
£9.95

ORDER YOUR
SOUVENIR COPY
NOW

Scan the QR code above or visit store.newsquest.co.uk/railway200
to order your copy for £9.95 (PLUS P&P)

classicmagazines

Celebrate what you love with a magazine subscription

WHAT IS THE RAILWAY MAGAZINE?

Britain's best-selling rail title - published continuously since 1897 - commands the respect of professionals and enthusiasts alike.

200
MONUMENTS & MANIA: HOW THE 1840s SHAPED TODAY'S RAILWAY
The RAILWAY Magazine
BRITAIN'S BEST SELLING RAIL TITLE
Full house!
Tickets for the 'Greatest Gathering' sell out in days
THE LIFE OF GEORGE BEHREND: EXPERT IN LUXURY TRAINS

Message from the Editor...

Welcome to The Railway Magazine, the most authoritative rail publication in Britain today. We pride ourselves on our news content and unique blend of award-winning trackside photography, features, interviews, and exclusives. Our wide-ranging coverage of the rail industry and heritage railways, past and present, is second to none and we'd love to welcome you on board.

Paul Bickerdyke

WHAT IS KITCHEN GARDEN?

Simply put this is Britain's best guide to growing your own delicious fruit and veg. It offers advice from practical gardeners to make sure you get the tastiest produce from your plot.

BRING IN THE SUMMER WITH OUR SQUASH GROWING GUIDE
CLAIM YOUR FREE BLUEBERRY FRUIT PLANT
Kitchen Garden
THE UK'S BEST-SELLING GROWING YOUR OWN MAGAZINE
EXCLUSIVE OFFERS AND GIVEAWAYS INSIDE
DELICIOUS STRAWBERRIES
PICK YOUR OWN FROM THE PATIO
GROWING GUIDES
CABBAGES, KOHL RABI & MINT
PLANT FEEDING made easy!
PLAN YOUR NEW VEG PATCH
7 pages of inspiration
ONIONS & GARLIC
From plot to pot
plus DISCOVER FIELD BEANS ★SOW FRAGRANT SWEET PEAS ★TOP TASKS FOR MARCH ★TASTY RECIPES FOR YOU TO TRY★

Message from the Editor...

Welcome to Kitchen Garden, where we offer down-to-earth advice from hands-on writers and contributors that helps you get the best from your plot. There are tips on how to grow a wide range of fruit, vegetables and herbs and how to control troublesome pests, plus what to do on your patch each month. We also feature buying guides, recipes and inspirational garden visits. Gardeners up and down the country share their experiences of sowing, growing and harvesting and every month KG has prizes and offers that could save you a fortune on a range of gardening essentials.

Steve Ott

VISIT: www.classicmagazines.co.uk CALL: 01507 529529

Your favourite magazines delivered direct to your door. Free Post & Packaging.
Huge savings across our whole range on 12 & 6 month subscriptions.

Subscribe Today

Great subscription offer

Sign up today for **£29.99*** and get **12 issues** of your favourite magazine delivered direct to your door.

You will also receive these to fantastic books worth **£26.98**

**This offer is a direct debit offer with year one priced at £29.99, rolling onto £47.95 in year two, before continuing at this rate until you cancel. This offer is cancellable at any time.*

Receive two books worth £26.98

David Holmes
The Life and Times of the
Station Master
Fleet Air Arm Legends
Supermarine Seafire
1
Matthew Willis

WHAT OUR READERS SAY ABOUT *BEST OF BRITISH*

★★★★★

Excellent variety of nostalgia, information and illustrations – my favourite magazine in fact.
MR C KENNETT, DUNSTABLE

★★★★★

The range of topics covered in the magazine never ceases to amaze me. Keep it up.
PETER J GASKIN, IPSWICH

★★★★★

I have been reading your great mag for years, keep up the great work.
RAY GRIFFITHS, GRIMSBY

Call 01507 529529 and quote BOBDPS3

Online: www.classicmagazines.co.uk/bobdps3

or scan the QR code to go straight to our secure online store

THE UK's TOP NOSTALGIA MONTHLY

BEST OF BRITISH

PAST AND PRESENT

SIMON STABLER, EDITOR

Best of British is the UK's premier nostalgia magazine, covering every aspect of life from the 1930s to today. Packed with features that celebrate classic entertainment, transport, food and drink, and more, not to mention Postbag and the Yesterday Remembered memoir section, a subscription to Best of British is always going to be great value.

663
ALDGATE
FXH 606

WHY YOU SHOULD READ BEST OF BRITISH EVERY MONTH

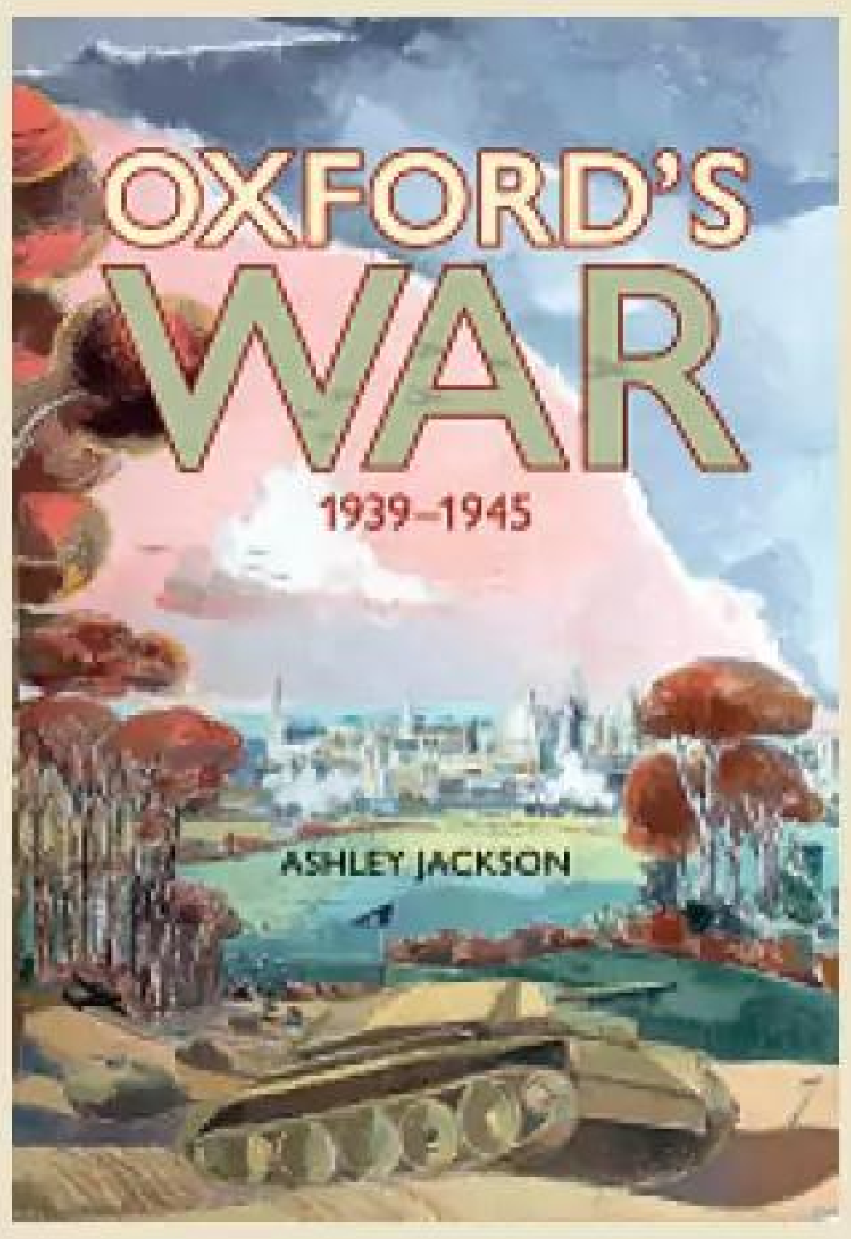
» Interviews with the stars of classic TV, film and music » A lively Postbag and Yesterday Remembered section » Images and memories from The Francis Frith Collection » Plan great days out with Postcard from... and Out & About » Guess the values of our Treasures in the Attic » A trip down memory lane

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Rates are based on UK orders only – for overseas please visit www.classicmagazines.co.uk/bob-overseas. Subscriptions will start with the next available issue. Offer closes 24/04/25. This offer is a direct debit offer with year one priced at £29.99, rolling onto £47.95 in year two, before continuing at this rate until you cancel. This offer is cancellable at any time. Full terms and conditions can be found at www.classicmagazines.co.uk/terms. Quoted savings are based on a 12 issue direct debit subscription when compared to the cost of 12 full price printed issues

Bookshelf

David Brown checks out the latest releases

BOOK OF THE MONTH



Oxford's War: 1939-1945

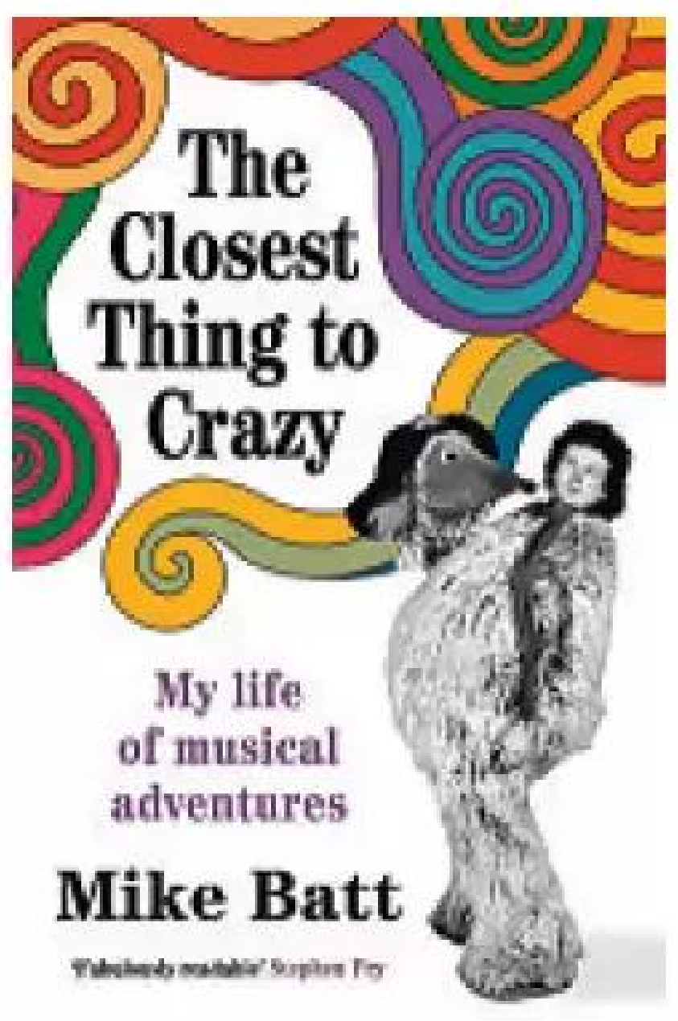
By Ashley Jackson, Bodleian Library Publishing, hardbook, £30

During World War Two, German aircraft often flew above the city of dreaming spires, Oxford, on bombing raids to the industrial Midlands but didn't target Oxford itself. There is an unsubstantiated theory that Hitler had chosen Oxford for his UK capital after he had won the war and wanted to be awarded an honorary degree there.

This is just one of the questions considered in this thought-provoking volume on the city and its surrounding area as examined by author Ashley Jackson, military historian, professor of military history at King's College, Cambridge and a visiting fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford.

Some of Oxford's university buildings were taken over to help support the war effort. The Ministry of Food, the Foreign Office, and Ministry of Information were among those playing their role in their new surroundings. The city was also home of many academics whose intellectual resources were engaged in various aspects of the nation's defence, while others contributed at acknowledged centres such as Bletchley Park and for MI5 at Blenheim Palace. Many scholars escaping fascism found a suitable, temporary home in Oxford, only too pleased to add their expertise. Outside the city itself, the automotive factories at Cowley were switched to the production of military equipment, plus the job of restoring battle-scarred Hurricanes and Spitfires.

Making the most of archive material from the period and first-hand accounts, this well-researched and presented study puts a lot into perspective.



The Closest Thing to Crazy: My Life of Musical Adventures

By Mike Batt, Nine Eight/Bonnier Books, hardback, £25

There was a time in the 1970s when it was difficult to avoid the music of Mike Batt, as he was very much in demand to weave his special magic with a diverse range of talents, solo performers and bands. Having Batt's involvement in your next single couldn't guarantee that you would have a big hit, but it might well help.

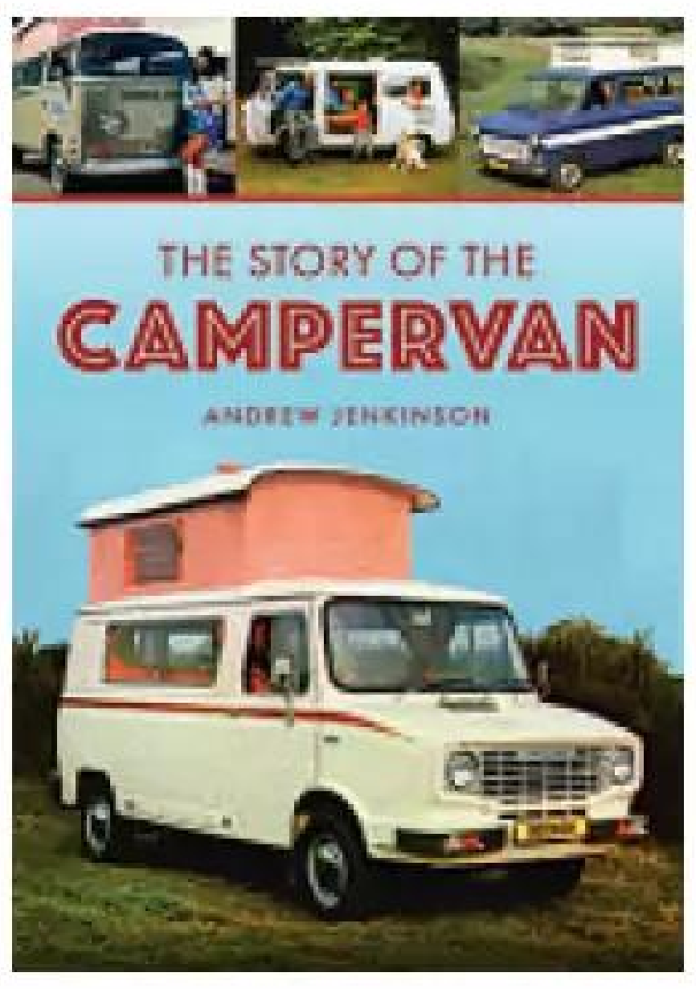
Being a man who was happy to dress up as a Womble, and who produced their many successful singles and albums, might have put some people off, but no, he charmed everyone from the royal family to rock group royalty.

Mike has been writing his biography for a couple of decades and weaves a compelling description of the truly crazy things that have happened to and around him as he tackled aspects of serious music through to Wombling Free, providing huge hits for the likes of Art Garfunkel and Katie Melua.

People were drawn to approach Mike to help them achieve something different such as folk-rockers Steeleye Span, whose Batt-produced All Around My Hat gave their music a broader recognition. Steeleye members didn't mind dressing as Wombles to appear on Top of The Pops, either.

Other personal favourites were David Essex's wonderful A Winter's Tale, and the Kursaal Flyers' Little Does She Know, which had everything including the kitchen sink in the mix.

See also Simon Stabler's feature Remember, He's A Womble in the December 2024 edition of Best of British.



The Story of the Campervan

By Andrew Jenkinson, Amberley Publishing, paperback, £15.99

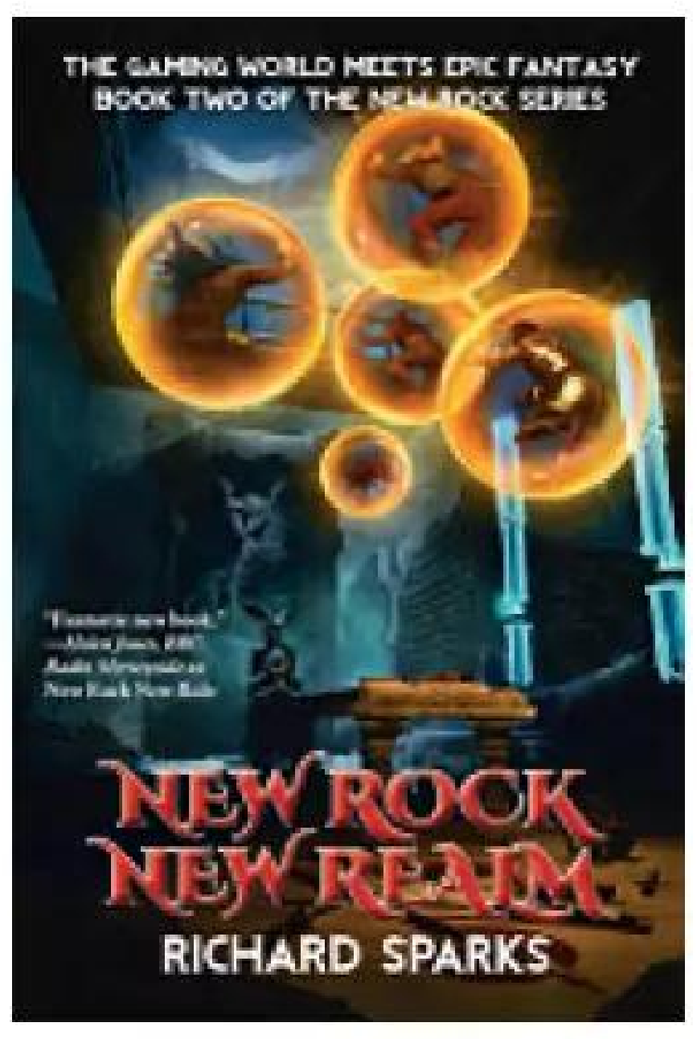
In the 1950s, the idea of vehicles that could be used as mobile accommodation in addition to being a convenient mode of transport became increasingly popular. Subsequently they saw great development, diversification and refinement and remain a prized choice among collectors.

Volkswagen conversions were an early success in Germany thanks to Westfalia's camping box idea for the Type 2 panel van. A network of VW conversion specialists grew up in the UK, too. British campervans developed from the likes of Bedford CA vans have survived in smaller numbers, but continue to turn heads, especially when sporting a striped Dormobile-style raised roof.

From the Austin A60-based Sun-Tor to the Rootes Group Commer range, Land Rovers to the Renault Trafic, Ford Transits to the Toyota HiAce, there are plenty to choose from.

This study is about more than nostalgia as it introduces many of the changes that have happened in the camper market in recent years. Post-covid, there has been increased interest in the freedom offered by camper vans, though today you usually have to stay at an official site and some of the modern vans are much bigger and boast more home comforts.

The fine spread of archive images and period advertisements that recognise the many different vehicles will promote much discussion along the lines of "Dad had one of those" and "I've never seen an example of that variant". Great fun, like the campervans themselves.


THE GAMING WORLD MEETS EPIC FANTASY
BOOK TWO OF THE NEW ROCK SERIES
NEW ROCK NEW REALM
RICHARD SPARKS

New Rock New Realm

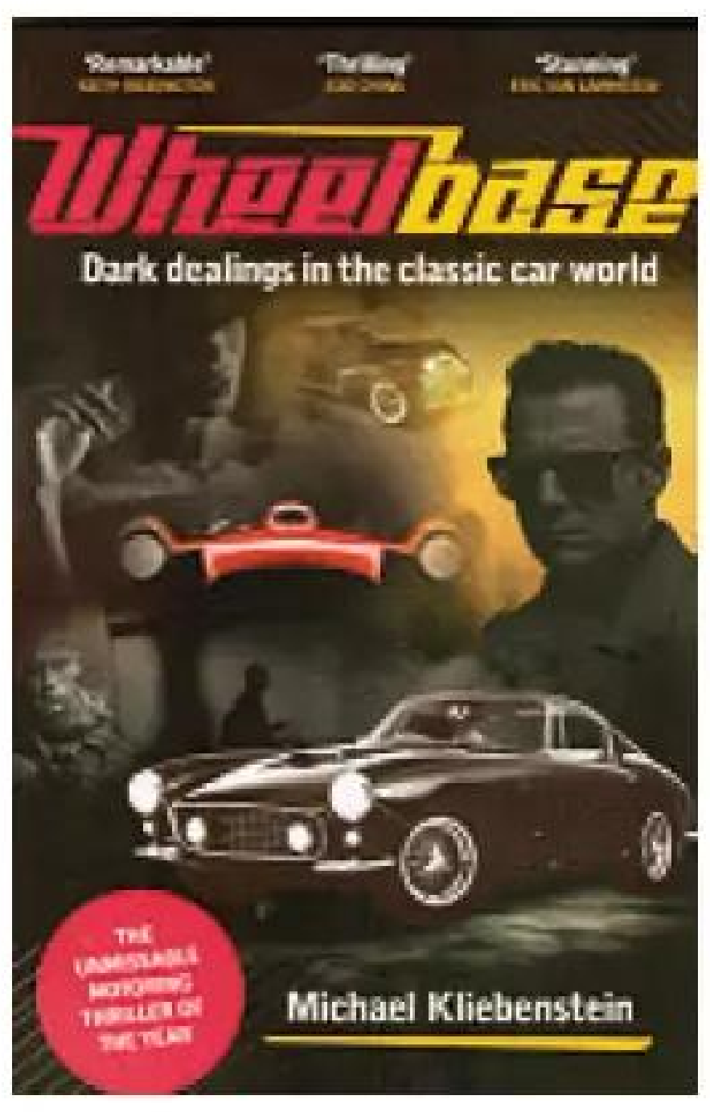
By Richard Sparks, Caezik, paperback, £16.99

Having established an amazing storyline in 2023's New Rock New Role, where gamers are immersed into an epic fantasy quest, the characters are back for the second instalment of a series that has gripped so many readers.

It certainly helps if you read them in the correct order or a newcomer could get overwhelmed and lost with all the quirky plots and twists along the way. Basically, a group of prize-winning gamers wake up to find themselves living within their game and on a quest that will pitch them against various tasks, enemies and creatures. But first, they must find their friends and work out exactly what sort of world they now exist in. The real world can wait.

The new story gets under way when a ghost ship materialises with a message for them. To solve their fresh challenges over the next 500 pages, the team meets several new characters along the way with an engaging mix of humorous and horrific incidents to keep them stretched to survive within this strange world where good and evil constantly battle against each other.

This new realm will engage previous readers and keep them eagerly turning pages to reveal the next move. Fans will be awaiting the third book (of four), which is due to follow later this year.



Wheelbase: Dark Dealings in the Classic Car World

By Michael Kliebenstein, Porter Press International, paperback, £13.99

In recent years there has been a popular trend for basing non-fiction crime and murder stories on specific UK locations to cater for the holidaymaker market. Therefore, let's welcome a return to the days of a wider based international adventure that tackles the "dark dealings in the classic car world" – and we're not talking about swapping the plates on a Morris Minor.

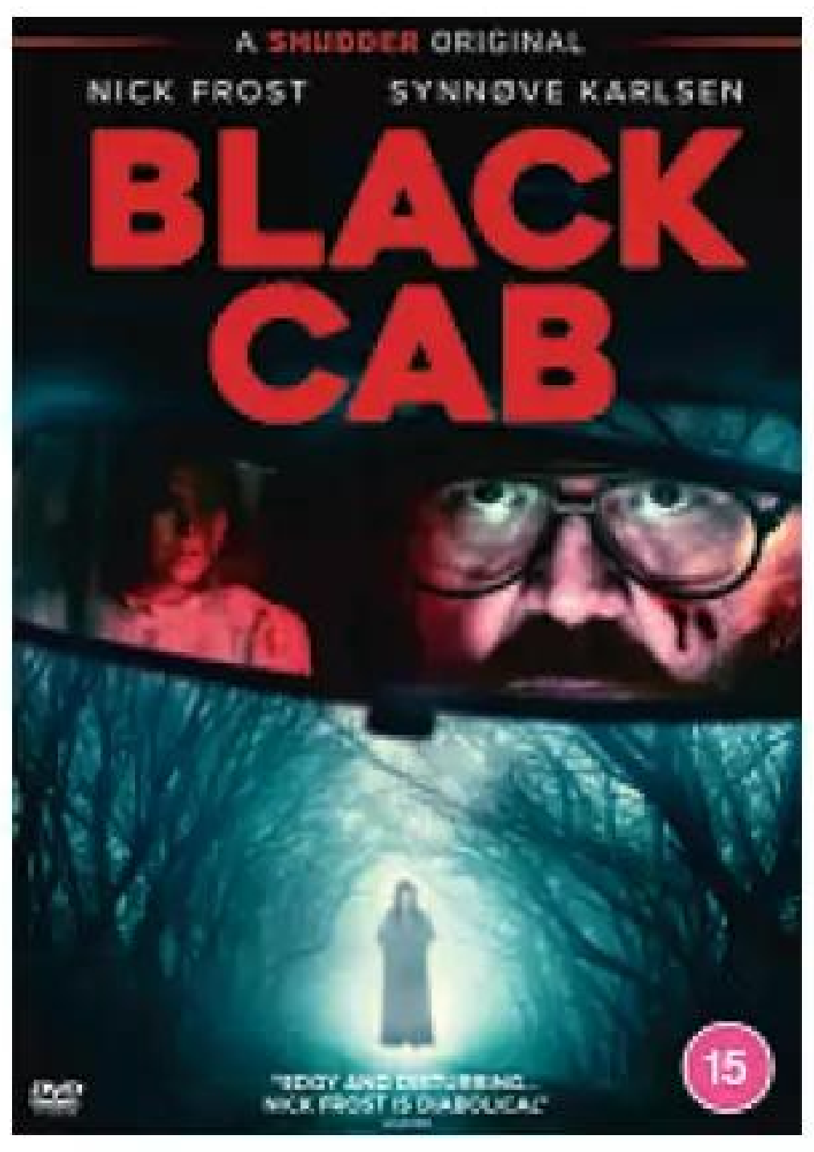
Author Michael Kliebenstein uses his 45 years of experience in various aspects of the classic car world, including his non-fiction hit Superfinds, to reveal a disturbing plot. Central character Mike Chapman is a high-end trader with some wealthy clients who knows his cars and can spot even the best fakes and scams.

When Mike is offered a stunning collection of historic Italian sports cars from the 1950s and 1960s, including several sought-after Ferraris, race winners and upgraded rarities, it seems too good to be true. Perhaps it is, but with the prospect of securing a £70m deal, it becomes something he can't ignore. Some would say that these are cars that some people would kill for, which could just be the case.

The central thread of Wheelbase involves not just the collection of exceptional cars that wealthy collectors would drool about and hand over the top price to call their own, but one of the vehicles hides a secret with links to an organised crime network in Europe, people you don't want to do business with or get the wrong side of.

Like the cars themselves, this engaging read is told with pace and style to match the subject matter.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT



Black Cab

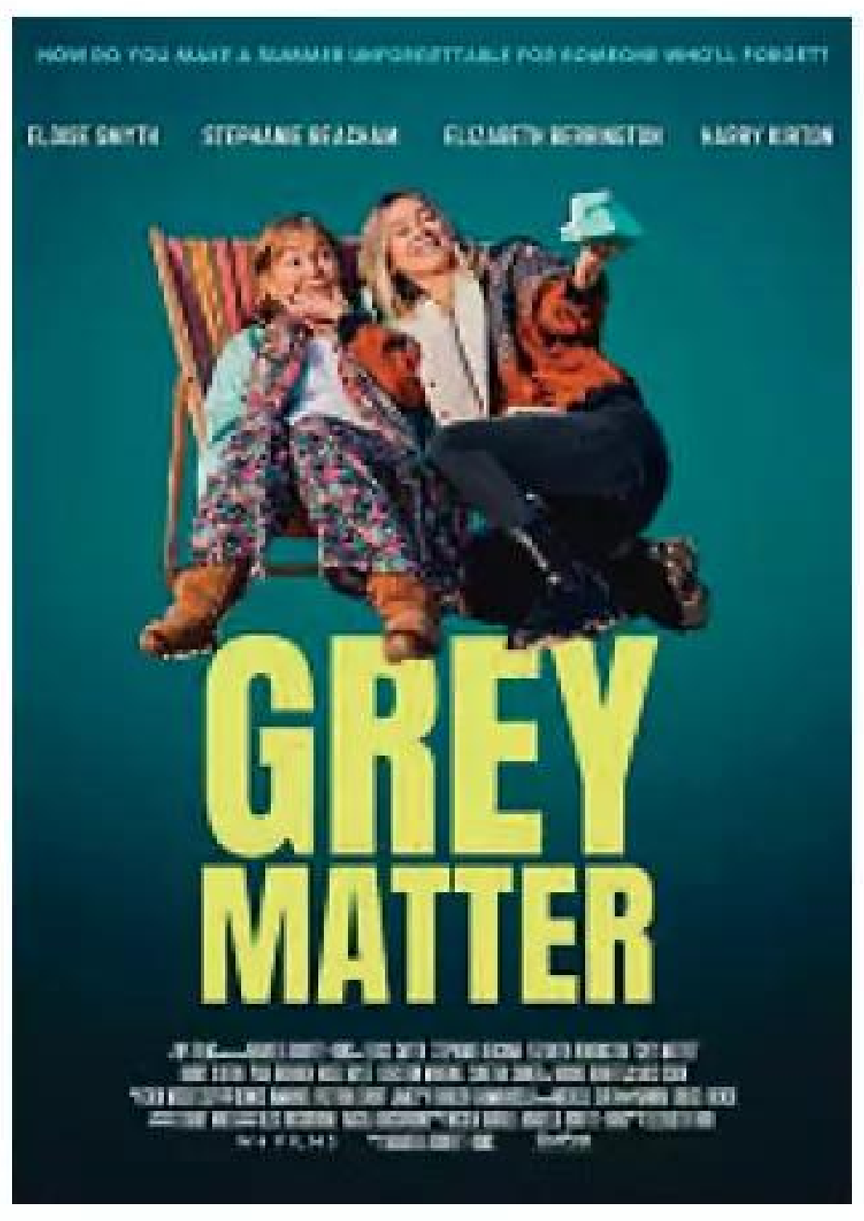
Blu-ray, DVD and digital download, Acorn Media International, released on 7 April

To say that a couple's Friday night out does not go to plan in this dark story is an understatement, for slowly and surely it turns into a nightmare. As viewers are introduced to Anne (Synnøve Karlsen), it is obvious she is not keen to go for a meal with her boyfriend, Patrick (Luke Norris), and a couple of friends.

When he boldly announces to them that they are getting back together and going to get married, Anne wishes she wasn't there, and the ensuing dialogue sees her leave the restaurant and hail a cab. Ideally, she would like to go home and on her own, but Patrick is not going to let that happen and climbs in the back of the cab with her.

The driver (Nick Frost), tries to discover where exactly it is that the couple want to go, continuing to try to make conversation with them in an annoying, but generally friendly way. The couple seem too involved with their own troubles to care. Things turn from bad to worse as the driver suddenly reveals his intention to abduct them and drives off along a haunted country road where the ghost of Mabel Hill is a regular sight.

It's a tale of broken relationships and lost children, that takes a few wrong turns before delivering its inevitable shock ending. Strap in for a bumpy ride.



Grey Matter

Digital download, Miracle Media

Tackling a sensitive subject like the onset of Alzheimer's disease, calls for a careful approach that recognises the problems of an elderly family member losing more than just their memory. Director Arabella Burfitt-Dons has achieved a fine balance to educate viewers about this degenerative disease by creating scenes of hope and understanding among the worries and devastation.

Peg, played with impressive understanding by Stephanie Beacham, is the central figure whose unusual, independent lifestyle is threatened by her diagnosis. Her family take her in to live with them, but her daughter (Elizabeth Berrington) leads a busy, working life that requires her to take tablets to cope, and it lands on teenage daughter Chloe (Eloise Smyth) to help her nan create some memories and try to keep them in focus.

Chloe has lost interest in classes, quits her favoured sport of swimming and brings her job to a premature end. She is happy just to lounge around at home. With the help of a newfound friend, whose mother is also living with Alzheimer's, they set out to make Peg's standard of life as good as possible.

When the time comes for Peg to move to accommodation where she can be looked after among other elderly people, Chloe loses sight of the goal, but can she come round and put her own life back on track, too?

Filmed in sunny Suffolk, mostly in and around Southwold on the coast, this delicate subject matter is presented with hope and affection.

OUT&ABOUT

Places to go, people to see

Doing Time – The Railway Apprentice

An exhibition exploring the history of Swindon Works' renowned apprenticeship programme has opened at STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway. In celebration of Rail 200, Doing Time – The Railway Apprentice features a wealth of objects from the collections of the museum, which is based on the site of the former engineering facility.

Among the highlights are an apprentice register from 1908 which documents the names of the GWR's newest recruits; an array of archives and apprentice made objects from Swindon's Pre-Apprentice Training School; and a charcoal drawing from the Museum & Art Swindon collection by local artist Hubert Cook depicting an apprentice at work in Swindon Works. Beginning by looking at the experiences of the first railway apprentices, the exhibition which runs until 31 December follows the story through to the final apprenticeships offered at Swindon's Pre-Apprentice Training School, up until the closure of Swindon Works in 1986.

01793 466646, www.steam-museum.org.uk

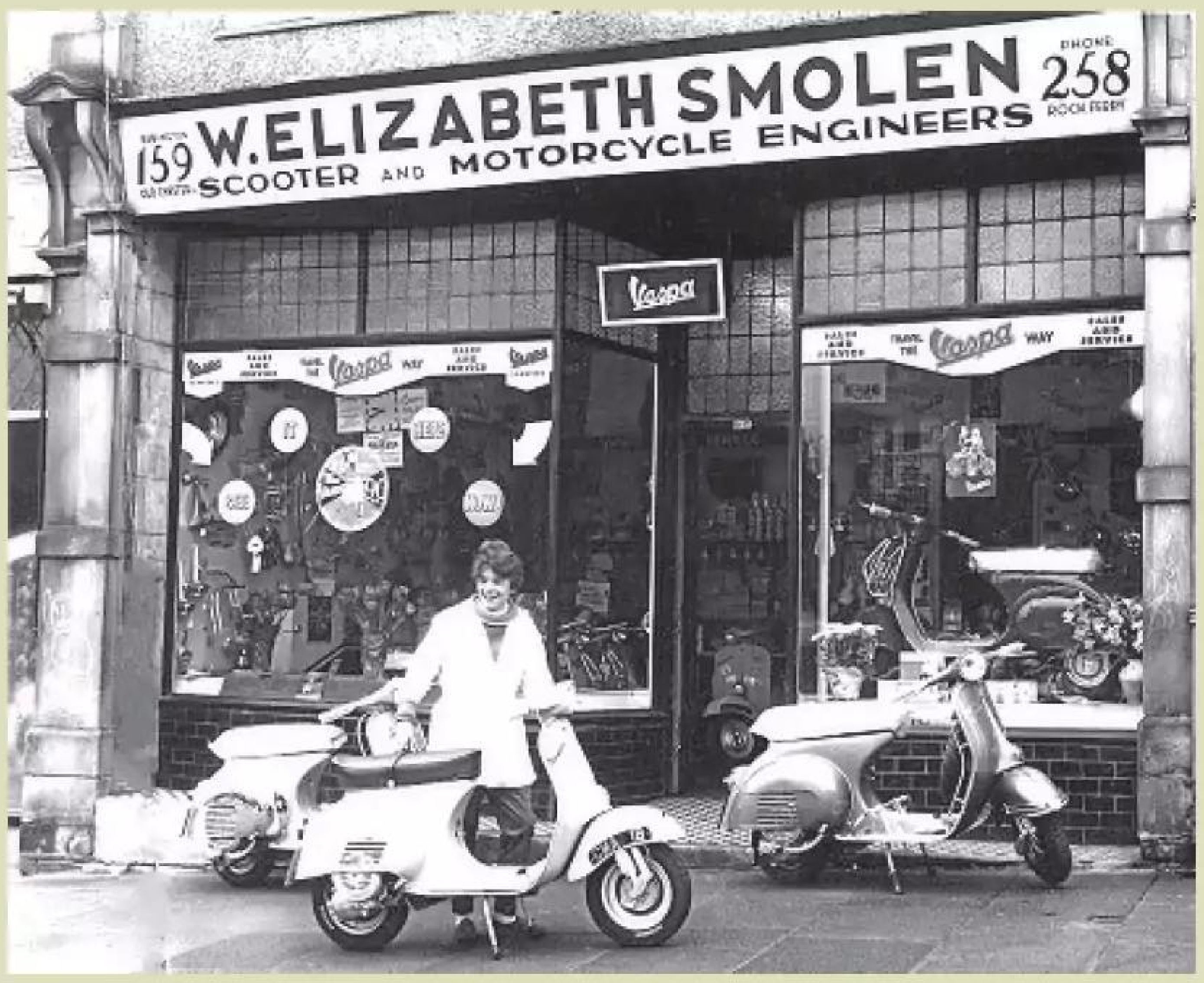
Swindon Works' renowned apprenticeship programme shaped generations of skilled workers and made a lasting impact on Britain's railways.

Elizabeth Smolen: Trailblazer

A Polish refugee who became a champion scooter racer and successful businesswoman is the subject of a new exhibition at Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead. Running until 20 December, Elizabeth Smolen: Trailblazer tells the story of a keen motorcyclist and engineer who by repairing, dealing and racing scooters, became part of Wirral's scooter scene. Exploring Smolen's early life against the backdrop of Soviet Poland, the exhibition shows how her daring escape to England allowed her to make a new home in Wirral. Objects from Smolen's life, including two Vespa scooters, will be on display, alongside information about Smolen's rich life, and stories from those who remember her.

The exhibition also explores the broader Wirral scooter scene, featuring photos and memorabilia from Birkenhead-based Cloud 9 Scooter Club.

0151 666 3537, williamsonartgallery.org



Discover the life of a Polish refugee who settled in Birkenhead and became a champion scooter racer and successful businesswoman.

Maps: Memories from the Second World War

An exhibition that charts the creation and use of maps during World War Two has opened at Edinburgh Castle. Running until 25 January, Maps: Memories from the Second World War features personal stories, photography and memorabilia. From aerial photography to war diaries, and even a fashionable dress made from escape and evasion maps, the exhibition introduces us to a prisoner of war, an RAF pilot, a brigadier and an army chaplain through the maps they kept as a memory of their war service. Between 1939 and 1945, more than 3,000m maps were produced for allied, Soviet and German forces. Originally used to navigate the jungles of south-east Asia or for devising an escape plan, the maps on display are now mementoes, kept alongside medals and photographs.

0131 225 9846, edinburghcastle.scot

Through personal stories, photography and memorabilia, the exhibition charts the creation and use of maps during World War Two.

Photograph: (Maps) Stewart Attwood

NOT TO BE MISSED

Three Victorian Travellers

(Until 20 April)
Step into a world of art and adventure in this captivating exhibition, featuring more than 80 original artworks by three extraordinary Victorian watercolourists, Albert Goodwin, Hercules Brabazon Brabazon and Walter Tyndale.

Mottisfont, near Romsey, Hampshire
01794 340757, nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont

Milestones; Rioters in Drag and the Grotesque

(Until 27 April)
A cursory look at milestones, directional signs and boundary stones in and around Salisbury with occasional excursions into the weirdness of Cornish milestones. As for rioters in drag and the grotesque… you'll have to visit the exhibition.

The Salisbury Museum, Salisbury, Wiltshire
01722 332151, salisburymuseum.org.uk

John Lyons: Carnivalesque

(Until 05 May)
See the first major retrospective exhibition of Caribbean British artist and poet John Lyons and discover the contribution he's made to British art, literature and art education over the past 60 years.

The Box, Plymouth, Devon
01752 304774, theboxplymouth.com

David Hockney: Pieced Together

(Until 18 May)
Explore world-renowned Bradford-born artist David Hockney's pioneering use of film and photography to record images with a true-to-life sense of time, scale and perspective.

The National Science and Media Museum, Bradford, West Yorkshire
0330 058 0058, scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk

Strange Presence: John Hoyland Paintings

(Until 18 May)
Showcasing a selection of the bold, striking abstract paintings for which Hoyland is best known. The paintings are accompanied by sketchbooks, photographs and archival film offering a rare insight into Hoyland's inspiration and studio practice.

Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, South Yorkshire
0114 278 2600, sheffieldmuseums.org.uk/visit-us/millennium-gallery

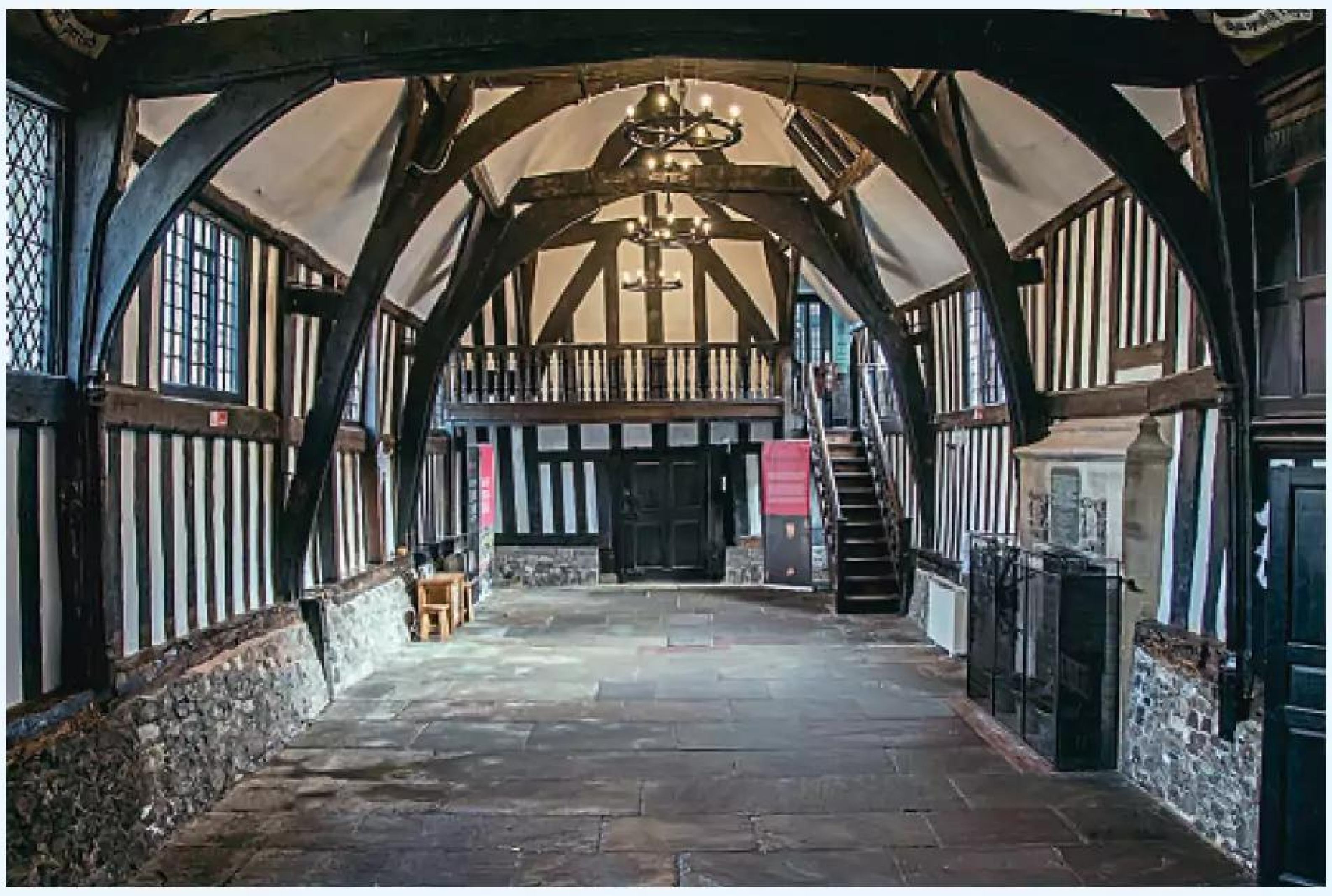
The Scottish Colourists: Radical Perspectives

(Until 28 June)
Showcasing the Scottish Colourists in the context of their European contemporaries for the first time, interrogating how this international generation of radical painters forged a new language of colour in the early 20th century.

Dovecot Studios, 10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh
0131 550 3660, dovecotstudios.com

ATTRACTION OF THE MONTH

RELIGION IN LEICESTER
LEICESTER ABBEY
PARISH CHURCHES
CHARMS & THE CHURC



Leicester Guildhall
Built in about 1390, a tour of Leicester Guildhall will take you through the centuries and many uses of the site. The Great Hall, a place for entertainment, feasting and learning, continues to hold performances and concerts. With original objects and the latest digital technology, the Medieval Galleries show what life was like in medieval Leicester and invites families to get dressed up and walk the streets of the medieval town. Home to the city's first police station, come face to face with two of Leicester's notorious pick-pockets within the Victorian police cells.

What to eat: Overlooking the cathedral gardens, Café No:7, which is adjacent to the Guildhall, serves a selection of light bites and refreshments including Fairtrade teas, sandwiches and a tempting range of cakes and pastries in addition to award-winning One Roof Coffee which helps support homelessness charity One Roof Leicester.

Disabled Access: There is a cobbled path leading to the entrance, while the ground floor is wheelchair accessible. A wheelchair loan is available. There is an accessible toilet. Assistance dogs are welcome, and water can be provided upon request.

How to get there: Located in the heart of the city centre, within walking distance of most car parks, the nearest large car park is located on St Nicholas Circle (LE1 4LF). A five-minute walk from The Clock Tower, and 10 minutes from Leicester railway station, local travel information is available at choosehowyoumove.co.uk

Opening times and admission: Open Monday to Sunday, 11am-4.30pm. General entry is free, however, a small donation of £2 is suggested.

Leicester Guildhall, Guildhall Lane, Leicester LE1 5FQ (0116 253 2569, leicestermuseums.org/leicester-guildhall)

DIARY DATES

GREAT BRITISH EVENTS

🟥 **SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND**
Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, Channel Islands

🟦 **SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON**
Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, Isle of Wight

🟪 **WEST OF ENGLAND**
Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire

🟨 **EAST OF ENGLAND**
Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk

🟧 **MIDLANDS**
Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire

⬛ **NORTH OF ENGLAND**
Cheshire, County Durham, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire, Isle of Man

🟥 **WALES**

🟦 **SCOTLAND**

🟩 **NORTHERN IRELAND**

SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND

03 MUSEUM ENTRY & TOWN HISTORY WALK (11AM-NOON)

Combine your visit to the museum with an entertaining town history walk led by a knowledgeable guide. Meet outside the museum for the walk. Booking essential.
Lyme Regis Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset
01297 443370, lymeregismuseum.co.uk

06 HAYNES BREAKFAST CLUB (8AM-NOON)

Bringing together like-minded motor enthusiasts to meet and share their automotive passion and enjoy breakfast. This month's theme is Ford vs VW. Booking essential. Spectator tickets available.
Haynes Motor Museum, Yeovil, Somerset
01963 442788, haynesmuseum.org

12-13 DORCHESTER ROMAN FESTIVAL (10.30AM-4PM)

This free, family-friendly event promises a spectacular celebration of Roman culture, with immersive activities, thrilling demonstrations, and hands-on experiences.
Maumbury Rings, Dorchester, Dorset
01305 262735, dorsetmuseum.org

21 MADHATTERS AND MARCH HARES (10.30AM-4PM)

Step into a whimsical world where heritage steam engines come alive, and the mill is filled with Easter-themed fun. Enjoy captivating demonstrations and family-friendly activities.
Coldharbour Mill, Cullompton, Devon
01884 840960, coldharbourmill.org.uk

26-27 MEET THE KINGSTON LACY LAMBS (10-11AM, NOON-1PM, 2-3PM)

Kingston Lacy's Portland sheep will be lambing throughout April so join a member of the farm team to meet the lambs. No need to book. Free event (admission applies).
Kingston Lacy, Wimborne Minster, Dorset
01202 883402, nationaltrust.org.uk/kingston-lacy

SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND AND LONDON

04 ULTIMATE EXPLORER EXCLUSIVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOURS (2-2.30PM)

Join a curator to see some of the collections not currently on display to the public and find out how the museum cares for the thousands of items in its collection. Booking essential.
National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Hampshire
023 9289 1370, nmrn.org.uk/visit-us/portsmouth-historic-dockyard

06 VINTAGE CAR SHOW (10AM-4.30PM)

Admire more than 100 marvellous pre-1956 vehicles, and ride on the narrow-gauge railway. Southdown vintage buses operating as well as steam locomotive Peter. Booking requested.
Amberley Museum, Near Arundel, West Sussex
01798 831370, amberleymuseum.co.uk

13 LONDON BUS MUSEUM SPRING GATHERING 2025 (10AM-5PM)

The south-east's biggest bus show is back and will be a fabulous day out for families and transport enthusiasts alike with around 100 visiting buses and coaches, old and new.
Brooklands Museum, Weybridge, Surrey
01932 857381, brooklandsmuseum.com

18-21 FOUR DAYS OF STEAM

In addition to trains running all four days, there will be an opportunity to pot your own flowers on Good Friday (everything provided), and an Easter egg hunt on the other days.
Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway, Sittingbourne, Kent
01795 424899, sklr.net

27 SIMPLY BRITISH (10AM-5PM)

All owners of British cars and motorcycles are invited to drive into the Beaulieu parkland and park up for a superb day out for both owners and enthusiasts.
National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire
01590 612345, beaulieu.co.uk

WEST OF ENGLAND

05-06 HERITAGE DIESEL DAYS

Take unlimited rides behind historic diesel locomotives or in the GWR diesel railcar and see many steam locomotives in the original GWR engine shed and around the centre.
Didcot Railway Centre, Didcot, Oxfordshire
01235 817200, didcotrailwaycentre.co.uk

06 STEAM DAYS

Enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of engines in operation along with guided tours to help explain the history of the exhibits and museum. Great family fun and no need to book.
Waterworks Museum, Hereford, Herefordshire
01432 342192, waterworksmuseum.org.uk

19-21 WHISPERS OF TREASON (11AM-4PM)

Put your detective skills to the test as you explore the historic hall, piecing together clues and listening carefully to whispers of conspiracy. Tread carefully – who can you trust?
Harvington Hall, Kidderminster, Worcestershire
01562 777846, harvingtonhall.co.uk

26 BIRTH OF THE JET AGE

Celebration of the first flight of Sir Frank Whittle's revolutionary jet engine during Gloster E28/39 taxi trials in 1941. Film shows and other jet age-related attractions.
Jet Age Museum, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
01452 260078, jetagemuseum.org

26-27 INTERNATIONAL LIVING HISTORY FESTIVAL

An unforgettable family day out, featuring hands-on activities, bronze age to cold war re-enactments, and a historically themed market.
Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire
01527 831363, avoncroft.org.uk

EAST OF ENGLAND

03 MORNING STROLL AT BELTON (10.30AM-NOON)

Immerse yourself in nature's embrace and go for a walk with a walk leader. Free (admission applies) but booking essential.
Belton visitor reception, Grantham, Lincolnshire
0344 249 1895, nationaltrust.org.uk/belton-house

12 ESSEX ELECTRICS EXHIBITION (10AM-4PM)

An event day for the fans of electric traction and electric units, plus diesel train rides between 10.30am and 3pm. See the museum's newest electric acquisitions, the class 309 and 317.
East Anglian Railway Museum, Wakes Colne, Colchester, Essex
01206 242524, earm.co.uk

19-21 DOG FRIENDLY DAYS

Your dog can join you on a journey back through history exploring the Medieval Wall Walk, Victorian Prison and Magna Carta. Castle grounds free to enjoy. All other admissions apply.
Lincoln Castle, Lincoln, Lincolnshire
01522 554559, lincolncastle.com

26 FAMILY SATURDAYS (10AM-3PM)

Try a range of activities from getting hands-on with objects to meeting costumed characters and unlocking your creative side with craft activities. Included in museum admission.
Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, Norwich, Norfolk
01603 493625, museums.norfolk.gov.uk/norwich-castle

27 VISIT THE VULCAN DAY (10AM)

Walk round Vulcan XL426 and for an additional fee you can climb inside for a guided tour of the cockpit and see what it was like to fly in this huge aircraft.
Vulcan Restoration Trust, London Southend Airport, Southend-on-Sea, Essex
avrovulcan.com

MIDLANDS

05 RED BY NIGHT (6.30PM)

Explore industrial history, when the factories and industry made the Black Country "red by night". Featuring steam action, industrial demonstrations and live entertainment.
Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, West Midlands
0121 557 9643, bclm.co.uk

05-06 REUNIFICATION OPEN WEEKEND

Find out more about GCR's plans to reunify the line between Loughborough Central and Nottingham. Train services on both GCR and GCR(N) linked by heritage bus. Extra attractions and behind-the-scenes activities at both railways.
Great Central Railway, Loughborough, Leicestershire
01509 632323, gcrailway.co.uk

12 SPRING 2025 OUTDOOR AEROBOOT/AEROJUMBLE (9AM-4PM)

The event will be hosted on the southwestern end of the Southfield site. Car parking close by, on the northern section of grass. Admission for buyers at normal museum admission rates.
Newark Air Museum, Newark, Nottinghamshire
01636 707170, newarkairmuseum.org

19 JAGUAR BREAKFAST CLUB (10AM-2PM)

Breakfast is available inside the museum's Junction 12 Cafe, making it a fantastic opportunity for Jaguar owners and fans to meet up and share their stories.
British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire
01926 895295, britishmotormuseum.co.uk

30 LEICESTER MUSEUMS STORE TOUR (1-2.30PM)

Take a fascinating behind-the-scenes stroll around the main object store. Booking essential.
Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, Leicester, Leicestershire
0116 225 4900, leicestermuseums.org/leicester-museum-art-gallery

NORTH OF ENGLAND

05 CLUB VISIT: JAGUARS AT THE LAKES (5-7.30PM)

This event will see 40 cars, both old and new, travelling from all over the UK and displayed in the outdoor exhibition area just outside the museum's main entrance.
Lakeland Motor Museum, Ulverston, Cumbria
015395 30400, lakelandmotormuseum.co.uk

05-06 MECCANO EXHIBITION 2025

See marvellous creations and learn all about the history of Meccano with the North Eastern Meccano Society.
Beamish Museum, Beamish, County Durham
0191 370 4000, beamish.org.uk

13 HERITAGE TRAIN RIDES

Enjoy a four-mile return trip following the route of the coal trains from the collieries to the River Tyne behind a vintage locomotive in 1950s passenger carriages.
Stephenson Steam Railway, North Shields, Tyne & Wear
0191 277 7135, stephensonsteamrailway.org.uk

16 SECRETS OF THE OLD HALL TOUR (10.30AM-NOON, 1-2.30PM)

A guided tour of the Old Hall, exploring the history of this fascinating site. Booking essential.
Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire
01625 374400, tattonpark.org.uk

26 SPRING STROLL (10.30AM-12.30PM)

Look out for signs of spring on this gentle guided walk around the farm and estate. £5 plus farm admission.
Temple Newsam, Leeds, West Yorkshire
0113 336 7460, museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/temple-newsam

WALES

05-06 FALCONRY AT THE ABBEY (10AM-4PM)

See majestic birds of prey in flight, learn how the Tudors used birds of prey and why falconry was the most popular sport of the day, and how birds of prey live. No booking required.
Tintern Abbey, Tintern, Monmouthshire
0300 025 2239, cadw.gov.wales

12 CYCLE JUMBLE (8.30AM)

A sale of cycle parts and surplus cycles in aid of the National Cycle Museum. The museum will be open.
Cefnllys School, Llandrindod Wells, Powys
07740 923630, cyclemuseum.org.uk

19-21 EASTER WITH THE ARDUDWY KNIGHTS (11AM-4PM)

What was it like to live in Castell Harlech in the 13th century? Step back in time with the Ardudwy Knights and enjoy archery displays and falconry talks. No booking required.
Castell Harlech, Harlech, Gwynedd
0300 025 2239, cadw.gov.wales

25 ARBORIST BLOSSOM AND HERITAGE ORCHARD TOUR AT DYFFRYN GARDENS (11AM-12.30PM)

Take a free blossom tour of the Dyffryn Gardens heritage orchard with senior gardener and head arborist, Rory Ambrose. Booking advisable. Admission applies.
Dyffryn Gardens, St Nicholas, Vale of Glamorgan
0344 249 1895, nationaltrust.org.uk/dyffryn-gardens

26-27 WONDERWOOL WALES (10AM)

The premier wool and natural fibre festival in Wales promoting its production and use in the country.
Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys
01938 820495, wonderwoolwales.co.uk

SCOTLAND

06 OPEN SUNDAYS (11AM-4.30PM)

Explore the collection of 140 buses, coaches, fire engines and commercial vehicles, from fully restored vehicles to those awaiting or under restoration.
Bridgeton Bus Garage, Glasgow
0141 554 0544, gvvt.org

13 SPRING FAMILY FUN DAY (10AM-4PM)

Featuring plenty of activities to keep both children and adults busy with a number of leisure pursuits as well as access to the gardens and grounds.
Glamis Castle, Forfar, Angus
01307 840393, glamis-castle.co.uk

19 KELVIN HALL BUILDING TOUR (10.30-11.15AM)

Join volunteer tour guides for a free 45-minute tour to learn about the history of Kelvin Hall and take a look at how the building is being used today. Free but ticketed.
Kelvin Hall, Argyle Street, Glasgow
0141 276 1450, glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/venues/kelvin-hall

22 A CENTURY OF THE SCOTTISH COLOURISTS WITH ALICE STRANG (5.30-6.30PM)

Join Alice Strang as she talks through the reputations of the Scottish Colourists and their positioning within art history. Includes entry to The Scottish Colourists: Radical Perspectives.
Dovecot Studios, 10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh
0131 550 3660, dovecotstudios.com

26 PUBLIC VALUATION DAY WITH LYON & TURNBULL (11AM-4PM)

Have your family treasures valued for free by experts from Lyon & Turnbull. A maximum of three hand-carry items per party. Free event but donations welcome.
Cowdray Hall, Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire
03000 200 293, aberdeencity.gov.uk/AAGM

NORTHERN IRELAND

05 CARNEGIE DAY 2025 (1-3PM)

An afternoon of family-friendly activities celebrating 119 years since the official opening of Larne Carnegie Free Library in 1906. Free, drop-in event.
Larne Museum & Arts Centre, Larne, County Antrim
028 2826 2443, midandeastantrim.gov.uk

12-13 NORTH DOWN MODEL RAILWAY SOCIETY SHOW

Around 40 layouts and displays, including Irish, British, European and American subjects with scales ranging from N gauge to 7.25ins.
Bangor Grammar School, Bangor, County Down
ndmrs.org.uk

● **Details correct at time of going to press – please confirm with event organisers before travelling.**

XXX ADULT DVD

ARE YOU TIRED OF THE SAME OLD BORING MATERIAL ?
WHAT WE SUPPLY IS, NEW, ORIGINAL, EROTIC CONTENT IN THE GENRE OF YOUR CHOICE.
SEXY, EXCITING FILMS & PHOTOS THAT YOU'LL WANT TO WATCH OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
SIMPLY COMPLETE THE COUPON BELOW AND LET US KNOW WHAT YOU YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE – WE'LL DO THE REST.
SAMPLE DVD £5 WITH FREE CATALOGUE*

GGI DVD GENUINE SUPPLIERS OF QUALITY ADULT MATERIAL

CATALOGUE PREFERENCE REQUEST

FULL NAME
ADDRESS
& POSTCODE

ENCLOSE £5 CASH ONLY

TELEPHONE (OPTIONAL)
TOPIC/PREFERENCE (OPTIONAL)

Please send your completed order form along with payment to:
GGI, Studio 514, 2 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 3DQ
*Please note: This offer applies to NEW customers ONLY

Boy Scout / Girl Guide Badges / Memorabilia Wanted by Collector

Peter Maryniak
27 Stowe Walk,
Parklands,
Northampton NN3 6EE
01604 452156
peter.maryniak27@outlook.com

ALL KINDS OF STEAM ENGINES WANTED

In any condition from running to needing work.
All locos, any size, stationary engines, including Stuart Turner etc.
Also traction engines, any size up to 4½ inch.
WILL COLLECT PERSONALLY.
ALL SCALES OF HORNBY ETC ALSO WANTED
For an informative chat please call Kevin on 01507 606772 or 07717 753200

Please mention BEST OF BRITISH PAST AND PRESENT when responding to adverts

Further to the article, WHEN BRITAIN ROCKED, Colin Mayo, has written a play entitled SOMETHIN' ELSE, which is a serious, non-musical stage play about Eddie and Gene.
Set on the night of 16th April 1960 backstage at the Bristol Hippodrome, it is available for production by an interested theatre group.
It has a minimal set, 4 actors (3M and 1F), approx. 90 minutes.
Please contact Colin on 07925 183955 if interested

Murray Eckett: Proofreader

Are you an author with a manuscript or a member of an organisation that produces leaflets which require checking?
I am a qualified proofreader and can help you.
For further details please contact me on
01442 247083 or email murray.eckett@gmail.com

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Twenty Questions
1. Terrance Dicks who was born on 14 April 1935.
2. Dame Penelope Keith who was born on 2 April 1940.
3. Ritchie Blackmore who was born on 14 April 1945.
4. The Eagle.
5. Janice Long who was born on 5 April 1955?
6. Sir Ian Rankin who was born on 28 April 1960.
7. The Pennine Way, which was opened in April 1965.
8. Anna Chancellor who was born on 27 April 1965.
9. The Adventures of Parsley.
10. Timothy West.
11. Sir Alfred Hitchcock who died on 29 April 1980.
12. Arthur Negus who died on 5 April 1985.
13. Stephen Hendry.
14. Kenny Everett.
15. Peter Jones who died on 10 April 2000.
16. Margaretta Scott who died on 15 April 2005.
17. Malcolm McLaren who died on 8 April 2010.
18. Peter Howell who died on 20 April 2015.
19. Sean Arnold who died on 15 April 2020.
20. Jill Gascoine who died on 28 April 2020.

And I quote…
The Morris Minor whose discontinuation was announced on 18 April 1970

Dialect Detective
1b, 2a, 3a, 4a

What is it?
A telephone dial lock.

A	S	H	O	T	■	I	N	T	H	E
P	■	I	■	E	■	S	■	I	■	P
R	I	P	■	S	H	O	W	E	R	S
I	■	P	■	S	■	B	■	■	■	O
L	A	I	D	■	S	E	L	D	O	M
■	■	E	■	E	■	L	■	I	■	■
J	O	S	I	A	H	■	D	A	R	K
E	■	■	■	S	■	P	■	R	■	I
E	L	E	C	T	R	A	■	I	L	L
P	■	G	■	E	■	S	■	S	■	T
S	U	G	A	R	■	S	I	T	E	S

Treasures in the Attic
1. Gallaher tobacco tin £30, 2. Blue Bird toffee tin £20,
3. Fordson Major E27N toy tractor £65, 4. Barratt sweet cigarettes £15,
5. Dummy marzipan chocolate bar £35, 6. Watney's Red Barrel beer mat £1,
7. Fisherman figure £40, 8. STAR ITEM Rowntree's cricket bat £200,
9. Human League record £3, 10. Festival of Britain programme £15,
11 Stoneware bottle £10, 12. Bunnykins baby bowl £20.

We're here
because you were there

BOOMradio

DAB+ and 'Alexa, play Boom Radio'

BACK IN TIME WITH COLIN BAKER

BoB's very own Time Lord recalls helping a pop star on his way, being "different" to Brian Murphy and dining according to billing

My secondary education was at St Bede's College in Manchester, then an all-boys grammar school. In the sixth form, as was common in many similar schools, if you hadn't blotted your copybook in any serious way by then, you were made a prefect. This gave you some duties and minor powers, which included attachment to a class lower down the school with various responsibilities, including helping to herd them occasionally from their form room to whole school events and ensure their good behaviour en route. It is with a memory of historical pride but current embarrassment that I acknowledge that I took my duties seriously. So, when a 14-year-old boy called Peter Noone was messing around in the line while queueing to go into chapel, I berated him and told him to get back in line. His brief response in words that I cannot use in this magazine meant I had no option but to tell him to deliver 100 lines to the head prefect the following day to the effect that he acknowledged that swearing and disruptive behaviour were a bad idea, and he would not repeat such inappropriate behaviour in future.

The next day he delivered the lines which were interspersed with repetitions of the offending expletives he had directed at me; perhaps he thought (with some probable justification) that the lines would get no more than a cursory glance before being binned. Sadly, he was wrong. He was then sent by the head prefect to the young priest whose dismal job it was to administer the strap to offenders.

Young Peter had clearly had enough of school discipline and yearned for his freedom, so declined to be punished and after being referred upwards one more time to the headmaster, his days at my school ended. A year later, he emerged as the lead singer of Herman's Hermits and I bought his records, aware that my slight role in his early departure from full time education had propelled him to do something that he was undeniably rather better at than following repressive school rules. He was undoubtedly into something good.

Interestingly, we have both appeared in the Royal Variety Show at the Palladium – me as one of a line of TV actors singing a Jack Buchanan song indifferently, he as lead singer of a very successful pop group. Arguably, I helped him on his way…

In 1990, I took over from Brian Murphy as Inspector Lord in a stage tour of Agatha Christie's Spider's Web. The production directed by the legend that was Charles Vance, starred Barbara Murray – a wonderful actress of the old school. When Brian left, I was drafted in for the last three months of the tour. Barabara's understudy rehearsed with me, as she was reluctant to confuse herself by rehearsing with another actor while still performing with the original.

So, on my opening night at Swindon Arts Centre, she was alarmed to discover that I was playing it "differently to Brian" and complained.

Eventually, she accepted that Brian and I were different performers and that no two actors would ever play the same part in the same way, and we got on very well. In fact, when we were in Bournemouth later in the tour, Barbara invited us all to lunch at her hotel, where bizarrely we were fed according to billing. The stars got a lovely crab and lobster salad, the supporting players chicken and the understudies and backstage staff burgers and chips. A glimpse of another age.

Colin's performance of Inspector Lord, in a tour of Agatha Christie's Spider's Web, was, according to his co-star, different to Brian Murphy's.

Photograph: Rob Pounsford/Shutterstock

HOME GUARD
EGYPT
RAF

WE'LL MEET AGAIN
WW2 HOMEFRONT
MUSEUM

Freiston Shore, Boston, Lincs

Postcode PE22 0LY

Open to the Public
Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays
10am - 4pm

Dedicated closed to the public days for groups
Booking essential for these exclusive days!

Contact Paul and Linda

Tel: 01205 270473 Mob: 07903 529614

Email: paulandlindab@hotmail.co.uk

(Made possible with the help of treasury Libor funding)

Charity No. 1176638 www.wma-ww2museum.co.uk

YORKSHIRE AIR MUSEUM | ELVINGTON | YORK

WE'LL MEET AGAIN

MAY 10/11, 2025

80 YEARS FROM VE DAY

A WEEKEND INSPIRED BY THE 1940s

Taking centre stage outside will be our Halifax bomber, surrounded by period re-enactors and a selection of vintage and military vehicles.

Across the weekend, enjoy a VE Day Street Party! Bring you own food or pick up a packed lunch from Café 77.

ON SATURDAY

Paula Marie

THE VINTAGE VOCALIST

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO BOOK PLEASE SCAN

YORKSHIRE AIR MUSEUM

ALLIED AIR FORCES MEMORIAL

Normal ticket rules apply - no additional tickets needed.

Accredited Museum No 66. Registered Charity 516766.